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# "Can't Nobody Fly With All That Stuff": Exploring Representations and Standards of Black Patriarchal Masculinity in Television, Film, and Music

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"Can't nobody fly with all that stuff"

Exploring Representations and Standards of Black Patriarchal Masculinity in Television, Film,  
and Music

Chloe Marshall  
February 20, 2014

## Table of Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| <b>Abstract</b>   | 3  |
| <b>Acknowledgements</b>   | 4  |
| <b>Introduction</b>   | 5  |
| <i>Literature Review</i>  | 5  |
| <i>Hegemonic Masculinity</i>  | 10 |
| <b>Methods and Sample Definition</b>  | 13 |
| <i>Overview of Research Methods</i>   | 13 |
| <i>Television Sample Definition</i>   | 13 |
| <i>Music Sample Definition</i>  | 16 |
| <i>Movie Sample Definition</i>  | 18 |
| <b>Scope and Limitations</b>  | 18 |
| <b>Television Analysis</b>  | 20 |
| <i>Fathers and Sons</i>   | 20 |
| <i>Single Guy/Dopey Friend</i>  | 29 |
| <b>Hip Hop Analysis</b>   | 34 |
| <i>Hip Hop in the Late 1990s</i>  | 36 |
| <i>Hip Hop in the Early 2000s</i>   | 41 |
| <i>Hip Hop Now: Late 2000s and Early 2010s</i>  | 44 |
| <b>Movie Analysis</b>   | 48 |
| <b>Conclusion</b>   | 60 |
| <b>Works Cited</b>  | 63 |
| <b>Appendix A: Internet Lists Used for Final Samples of Television, Music, and Movies</b> | 66 |
| <b>Appendix B: Television Analysis Notes</b>  | 68 |
| <b>Appendix C: Movie Analysis Notes</b>   | 72 |

## **Abstract**

This project explores representations of Black masculinity in television, music, and cinema. I analyze specific genres of each medium that display images of masculinity seen by a variety of audiences. From these images, I derive character types that I analyze using R.W. Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity. Ultimately, I draw conclusions about the media's contributions to a greater hegemonic model of masculinity for young Black males. The consequences of hegemony and patriarchal power are discussed as examples of how mainstream societal standards of gender identity are damaging to the progress of Black communities.

### **Acknowledgements**

Many thanks to Dr. Jessica Sherwood for all of the guidance and direction  
Much gratitude to all the friends and family that shared their journeys to manhood with me

## Introduction

What makes a man a "man"? Besides broad shoulders, flat chests, narrowed hips, and protrusions below the belts, what tells a man that he is undeniably a man? Gender studies, particularly the construction of masculine identities, is a diverse field that explores the many ways people answer questions of gender identity. In this project, I will explore the ways in which media—television, film, and music—answer the question of what makes a Black man a man. I focus on the young Black men of my generation who were born in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Being an African-American woman myself, I have been surrounded by Black men expressing their manliness in many different ways. Watching their journeys has always fascinated me because they are uniquely situated in American society; as Black men, they must inevitably face the discrimination that has marginalized them since their ancestral arrival as slaves. Their history within the American context is one of constant struggle against racist forces that seek to keep them from gaining power. America is built on white patriarchy, and Black males in this racist context are constantly fighting an uphill battle to establish a masculine identity that either exercises or rejects patriarchal power. In this project, I will use R.W. Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity as a framework for analyzing standard masculine characters derived from Black television, music, and film. Through media analysis, I seek to explain how these specific media outlets contribute to a hegemonic model of masculinity for Black men that allows them similar access to patriarchal power as white males.

## *Literature Review*

The body of literature on Black male gender studies examines how cultural and societal influences shape the ways in which Black men in America develop masculine identities. The literature used in this project focuses primarily on that development within racist contexts. Many

of the researchers propose that problematic gender identity constructions (i.e. Black males attempting to access white male patriarchy) contribute to the greater issue of the delayed progression of Black people as a whole. Much of the writing discusses how damaging patriarchal ideals are to Black people because these ideals arise from white power structures that do not allow Black advancement.

In researching Black men and gender identity, establishing a historical context was a key step in the literature; an understanding of the origins of patriarchy in America sheds light on how Black males must construct an identity that works within American standards. Black people originated in this nation as slaves, a status that immediately barred Black men from the opportunity to exercise patriarchal power in the same manner as white males. Why then would Black men want the same kind of power as their oppressors? Feminist author and activist bell hooks contends that as slaves, Black men learned patriarchal power from the often violent actions of their owners and overseers. The treatment of slaves by white overseers instilled the idea that violence was an effective method of control and a firm assertion of one's power. Black men often reenacted that violence as a means of asserting their own power as patriarchs over their wives. (hooks *We Real Cool* 4). Black men would often take their wives to the barn and “beat them as the white owner had done” (hooks, *We Real Cool* 4).

Patriarchal power continued to be exercised after slavery by Black men in an effort to gain the same kind of respect and authority their white counterparts had. Black men sought equality with white people that entailed equal access to white male privilege. hooks cites slave narratives that illustrate the desire Black men had to assume full benevolent patriarchy (referring to men who “exercise their power without using force”) (hooks, *We Real Cool* 4). She discusses how men did not feel their masculinity was affirmed until they were free to assert their own

power. Frederick Douglass fought his overseer and it "rekindled...the smoldering embers of liberty...and revived a sense of [his] own manhood" (hooks *Black Looks* 90). William Wells Brown, an escaped slave and abolitionist, lamented after watching an overseer beat his mother that "nothing can be more heart-rending than for one to see a dear and beloved mother or sister tortured...and not be able to render them assistance" (hooks *Black looks* 90). Post-slavery scholars such as W.E.B. Dubois and Martin Delaney were considered "male feminists" as they rejected the patriarchy that had been taught to them by white men (Neal 55). The *North Star's* (abolitionist newspaper) famous headlining statement that "right is of no sex [and] truth is of no color" summarized a belief that a small portion of the Black community at the time supported. While the ideas of these scholars persist in modern literature, patriarchy persisted longer and harder. Patriarchy represented a valid display of masculinity; it was a normative behavior that held the promise of power for Black men because of the success their white counterparts had with it (hooks 90). White men colonized America, they commanded the slaves, and they consistently hold offices of power. White men tend to make more money, they tend to be better educated, and they overall have greater opportunity to live happy, fulfilling, American dream-esque lives simply because they are men and they are white. America is built on the ideals of white male patriarchy (hooks, *Black Looks* 92). While Black men strive for the same privileges that this power structure offers, they must operate as subjects to it rather than partakers of it. Being Black prohibits them from full access to white patriarchal privileges.

It is noted by Mark Anthony Neal in *New Black Man* that modern assertions of Black patriarchy became very evident in widely publicized movements such as the Million Man March of 1995. Black men were fighting for their manhood, to be better men for themselves, for their families, and for the race. The Million Man March, in its mission statement, essentially blamed



Black men for the idled progress Black people had made and challenged those men to atone for their past wrongdoings and take up responsibility for the people's advancement (Karenga).

Although there were many female collaborators on the project, women were discouraged from attending the event. Minister Farrakhan, the leader of the event, asked women to "[stay] at home with the children teaching them in sympathy what Black men have decided to do" (Final Call). It was an opportunity for Black men to be in the positive spotlight, to distinguish themselves as the leaders of their families and their communities. Women were asked to take a backseat to their men that day, but Farrakhan thanked them for having "been so patient waiting for [Black men] to...stand up for [women] and [their] families," as though all this time it was up to Black men to handle the mess of Black culture that had been made (Final Call). Patriarchy is understood as a benefit to society that should be willingly embraced.

The historical background of Black masculine ideals in America provides a context in which to examine current constructions of Black masculinity. bell hooks uses a historical analysis to argue that patriarchy is a system that had to be learned by Black men. Other feminist authors in my research, such as Patricia Hill Collins and Mark Anthony Neal use Black history as a supplement to their arguments about Black male identity rather than as a basis for them.

In her book, *Black Sexual Politics*, Collins explores Black history in regard to cultural influences on Black masculine identity. Her focus is on media images that shape societal perceptions of Black males. From specific media examples, she examines Black male characters that serve as archetypal models of Black men. She focuses on the tendency of mass media to "blur the lines between fact and fiction" (Collins 151). The images of Black men produced by mass media pose a significant danger to Black people. These images skew perceptions of Black people and Black culture. They set guidelines for Black authenticity, especially of Black men,

that may contradict Black realities. The portrayals of Black men put forth by the media typically relate "Blackness" to negative stereotypes. Collins discusses Black male athletes as examples, such as Latrell Sprewell and Charles Barkley, athletes that gained fame despite their open defiance of authority. Sprewell brought bad publicity to the National Basketball Association when he choked his coach. The lack of restraint that led to his violent outburst reaffirmed beliefs that Black male bodies are brutish and need to be tamed (Collins 152). Collins further illustrates that images of Black male athletes underscore longstanding messages that Black men are physical, not intellectual beings (152). Through sports, in which a coach (usually white) provides guidance and punishment, Black men are reformed and resocialized to be submissive to their white superiors (155). Professional sport serves as a visible model for how Black men can be brought under white control. Collins uses Charles Barkley as an example of how defiance of that system can backfire for Black men. Barkley would often "speak his mind." In comparison to players who were "far more deferential to white authority," Barkley was controversial because he would openly disagree with the expectations white authorities set for him (157).

The Black male athlete is just one of the characters Collins describes, but her analysis is a model for how mass media reflects persistent beliefs about the dysfunctional nature of Black men. Media's "repaired" images of Black masculinity can make Black men appear safe and approachable because they conform to white standards and hide their "Blackness." Collins notes that "what Black people should be like" (in order to be safe by white standards) is being physically Black, but not possessing any cultural ties to Blackness (168). Essentially, Black men would have to sever any ties to their cultural understanding of their race and assume "raceless" personas that don't connote their Blackness. In this argument, in order for Black men to be

successful in a white-dominated society, they must conform to cultural norms that may not match (and may even contradict) their own.

While media portrayals of Black men represent a narrow range of Black maleness, studies of Black male perceptions of these images show that Black men don't believe that mass media accurately displays Black masculinity. Kristie Ford, in her study of self-perceptions of Black college men, interviews Black collegiate males. Their opinions reveal that Black men often "perform" their masculinity by acting out media-influenced personas that make them feel and look more authentically Black (Ford 52). Her interviews show how dangerous media influence can be on constructions of Black male identity. While Black men try to achieve what they see in media, they may fail to understand that those portrayals are unrealistic representations of Black men. As Collins notes, media blurs lines between fiction and reality which, in the examples of the young men in Ford's study, results in a dysfunctional understanding in men of how they should display their masculinity. In the words of one of her interviewees, "Black men are confused and hungry...to fit in, but they don't know how to" (52).

### *Hegemonic Masculinity*

For this paper, I chose to use Raewyn Connell's model of hegemonic masculinity as a basis for the media analysis. Hegemony is defined by Connell as "the most honored way of being a man" (Connell, Messerschmidt 832). It is a way of performing masculinity that utilizes the most prized characteristics of male gender display to formulate a standard of masculinity (Chaney 111). Connell's theory of hegemony focuses on the actual practice of gender; hegemony refers to an observable demonstration of gender rather than a nebulous idea of it. A hegemonic model is very fluid; it is not restricted by context, but rather highly influenced by it because hegemony focuses on the most *currently* accepted ways of manhood. The idea of the "most

honorable way" of being a man changes between populations and time periods. Men are required to react to the hegemonic model; they have the option to either accept or reject the model when defining their own identity (Chaney 111). The purpose of hegemonic masculinity is to "to preserve, legitimize, and naturalize" the subordination of women, otherwise known as patriarchy. Hegemony in this sense is a way to make patriarchy acceptable in a society; the specifics of any model work to justify male domination.

I use hegemony in this project because it works well within the context of American society. Patriarchy in America is firmly established as a social norm. Feminist movements against patriarchal structure have failed to overcome its powerful place in this nation. Feminist efforts began as suffrage movements in America in the early 1800s. Feminists have made strides in obtaining equal rights for women since that time (ratification of the 19th amendment in 1920 giving women the right to vote, passing of the Equal Pay Act in 1963 and the Civil Rights Act in 1964). Despite the triumphs of the movement, the image of feminists that persists is that of the 1968 Miss America protests, where women trashed the "instruments of women's oppression." It was here that the bra-burning, man hating, "feminazi" stereotype was born. Patriarchy thrives because of the existence of images like the feminazi that undermine the productive goals and accomplishments of the feminist movement. Rush Limbaugh exclaims that the feminist movement's goals are to "make women more like men...to dress like us, acquire power like us, [and] have careers like us." Beliefs like these cloud the intentions of movements against patriarchy. These ideas exemplify the damaging control patriarchy has on society. That control subverts the purposes of movements for gender equality to say that women don't want equality with men, they want to *be* men. This belief is reaffirmed by hegemonic masculinity. Hegemony perpetuates an image of masculinity that is positive and possesses honorable characteristics of

manhood that are then associated with patriarchy. Through hegemony, patriarchy improves its image then enhances it through the denigration of anti-patriarchal movements.

Using a hegemonic model for this analysis has several benefits and drawbacks. As mentioned before, the concept is by no means a fixed model and can be applied to any group in which patriarchy is the basis of masculine identity. The hegemonic male does not have to actually be embodied by any male; only a reaction to the model is needed to validate its existence. Connell argues that hegemonic masculinity results from men's "complicit or resistant stance to prescribed dominant masculine styles" (Wetherell et al 337). A male may not possess all of the characteristics of a hegemonic male, but his compliance lies in his acceptance of hegemonic masculinity as a template for his own masculinity. Applying this concept to my analysis makes the most sense because mass media forms specific images of men that serve as models to which men react. One major drawback of using Connell's hegemonic concept is the fact that it precludes the idea of a "male feminist" defining the model. A man who seeks equality between men and women cannot be the hegemonic model because he does not work to support patriarchy. In the following analysis, hegemonic masculinity will be discussed regarding models derived from the three forms of media chosen: television, film, and hip hop music.

## **Methods and Sample Definitions**

### *Overview of Research Methods*

All of the samples (movies, television, and music) were developed by first conducting an internet search using Google for "best of" lists. The general search terms used included superlatives such as "greatest," "best," and "top" in conjunction with phrases such as "...rap artists/hip hop artists/rappers of all time," "classic Black movies," and "Black television/tv shows." Lists were chosen based on their association with popular media outlets. For example, fan lists created by random users on a website were generally ignored while lists generated by major outlets such as MTV, VH1, BET, Source Magazine, Complex Magazine, and others were included. The lists for each media form were compiled and narrowed according to restrictive criteria that I developed. The lists used for this sample (known as the preliminary sample) are named in Appendix A. The criteria I used to define the final samples are defined in the following sections. Once the samples were defined, I conducted the analysis of each media form. The method of analysis is described in the following sections as well. Analysis notes for television and movies are included in Appendices B and C.

### *Television Sample Definition*

The television sample was developed by searching for highly rated Black television shows. I defined "Black television" fairly broadly. The sample includes television shows with primarily African-American casts; the director or producers of the show are not necessarily Black themselves, but they tend to be. The lists I used are listed in Appendix A. The criteria I used to narrow the lists to shows that I used in my analysis are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Criteria for Determining Final Television Sample

| The show is...                         | Reasoning  |
|--|--|
| Centered around a primarily Black cast | Shows are relatable to Black males when they have Black cast members   |
| Focused on family or young Black males |  |
| Aired between 1990 and early 2000s     | Shows would have aired during the formative years of the young Black men in my generation (during their late elementary/middle school years and forward)   |
| Nationally syndicated                  | These factors show the popularity of the show and the ease with which episodes can be found. The easier it is to find the show, the likelier people might be to watch it. YouTube accessibility was key for my research to make the process less expensive and time consuming. |
| Accessible via YouTube                 |  |
| Comprised of more than 3 seasons       |  |

The shows that I used in my sample were chosen because they fit all of the criteria listed in Table 1. The shows that I used in my sample and the characters that I focused on for analysis are listed in Table 2. The two types of shows included in the analysis are Black family sitcoms, which are comedies about Black families with a married couple and their children (usually two girls and a boy), and relationship-focused shows, comedic shows that focus on the interactions of

Black people in a particular setting (not necessarily family based). Notes on these television shows can be found in Appendix B.

Table 2: Final Television Sample

| Television Show             | Show Type            | Focus Characters   |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|--|
| The Cosby Show              | Family sitcom        | Cliff Huxtable (father)<br>Theodore "Theo" Huxtable (son)                                      |
| The Fresh Prince of Bel Air | Family sitcom        | Phillip Banks (uncle of Will, father of Carlton)<br>Will Smith (nephew)<br>Carlton Banks (son) |
| Martin                      | Relationship focused | Martin (main character)  |
| The Bernie Mac Show         | Family sitcom        | Bernie Mac (father figure, uncle)  |
| The Wayans Bros.            | Relationship focused | Shawn and Marlon Wayans (brothers)   |
| My Wife and Kids            | Family sitcom        | Michael Kyle Sr. (father)<br>Michael Kyle Jr. (son)  |



### *Music Sample Definition*

The music sample was developed by searching for highly rated hip hop/rap artists. I focused on hip hop because it is so strongly associated with Black people and as a genre, it is still in its developing stages. Hip hop defines and displays masculinity very boldly; certain images of masculinity are celebrated and praised in hip hop while others are derided. Hip hop images are also highly visible to the demographic that I focus my analysis on and often inform societal views of young Black men. The lists that I used to determine artists for analysis can be found in Appendix A. The lists of artists were compiled and ordered according to the artists that appeared with the highest frequency. I removed any artist who:

- Did not release any songs after 2000
- Released his first single before 1990
- Was in the "Top 30 Under 30!" list
- Was female
- Appeared less than three times
- Was not a Black male
- Had fewer than three Billboard Top 40 hits (on any list)

From the "Top 30 Under 30!" list, I chose the top five most well-known artists based on their number of Billboard Top 40 chart toppers. Those artists were then added back to the previous lists. The final sample lists is detailed in Table 3 with the artist name and the subgenre of rap to which he generally adheres (defined further in the hip hop section).

Table 3: Final Hip Hop/Rap Artists Sample

| Artist           | Subgenre        |
|------------------|-----------------|
| Notorious B.I.G. | Gangsta rap     |
| 50 Cent          | Gangsta rap     |
| Jay Z            | Gangsta rap     |
| Tupac            | Gangsta rap     |
| Kanye West       | Alternative rap |
| Snoop Doggy Dogg | Gangsta rap     |
| Nas              | Alternative rap |
| Outkast          | Alternative rap |
| T.I.             | Gangsta rap     |
| Lil Wayne        | Gangsta rap     |
| J. Cole          | Alternative rap |
| Drake            | Alternative rap |

For analysis, I focused only on the songs that were listed in the top 40s of any of the Billboard charts.

### *Movie Sample Definition*

The final movie sample was defined by consolidating all of the movie lists (Appendix A), then choosing all of the hood films (defined in the movies section) from that preliminary list. The sample was further narrowed by using only the films that focused mainly on the coming-of-age journey of a male protagonist. Films that were found in English on YouTube were then part of the final sample. The final sample includes *Dead Presidents*, *Boyz n the Hood*, and *Menace II Society*.

### **Scope and Limitations**

In this project, I focus on Black television, hip hop music, and hood films as an overview of some media that influence Black masculine images. I chose these specific genres because I feel that they contribute significantly to images of Black males in mass media. The samples include widely recognized television shows, artists, and movies to which Black audiences can relate. The samples relate most closely to the developmental years of college-age Black males (late teens, early 20s) that fall within my own generation. The majority of research used in the project is Black feminist writing and quantitative studies of Black males and their perceptions of manhood.

The major limitation of this project is the decision to exclude other forms of media as well as the exclusion of certain television shows, artists, and movies from the sample. The television sample focuses mainly on Black family sitcoms and shows with Black men as the headliners. The family sitcoms chosen are classic shows with characters whose fame transcends the shows themselves. The fathers in those shows tended to be known mainly for the show, but for other successful ventures as well. The shows with male headliners had characters known for more than the show itself as well. I chose to use those two subgenres for the television sample

because they encompassed classic television shows with iconic characters that represent positive masculinity for Black males. The movie sample was limited to three hood films because the themes and characters are generally very similar; to include more films in the sample of the same genre would have quickly become redundant. The music sample is an attempt to include artists from different subgenres of hip hop, but the world of hip hop can be vast. The sample of artists included covers mainstream artists that are highly recognizable among different audiences and excludes artists and subgenres that have more specific listeners (i.e. underground hip hop). The sample also excludes white artists because I want to focus exclusively on Black artists as reflections of Black males.

## Television Analysis

Black television has always been an outlet for African Americans to proudly display their cultural values and beliefs. Through this analysis, very specific ideas of masculinity emerged. In each show, the settings and story lines were very different, but the roles that males played fell into four main categories: The wise, loving father, the dimwitted, underachieving son, the young, handsome single guy, and the naive, dopey friend.

Male characters are not confined to one single category and they often cross over into others, usually through their growth throughout the series, the dynamics of a single episode, or because of relationships with other characters. For boys and young men through the 1990s and early 2000s, the prevalence of these images was important because they showed a consistent set of ways that a man could be a man. These four characters existed in the vast majority of Black television shows at the time. The consistency of the character types and the frequency with which those characters are employed in the Black TV sector send the message that these characters define the "acceptable" range of Black masculinity. They are long-standing examples of how Black males should see themselves and what they should strive to be in order to be culturally relevant, but still tolerated by society. Further understanding/analysis of these characters and their relationships to each other reveal what Black television seeks to broadcast as the expectations of an honorable Black man.

### *Fathers and Sons*

Black families are often stigmatized by recurring images of single-parent homes, fatherlessness, childhood delinquency, and poverty. Black mothers are slandered with images of the "welfare queen," the single woman using her children to profit off of the federal benefits system (Collins). Black fathers are considered extinct, along with "real" Black men. The absence

of Black fathers is often used to explain the mass dysfunction/disintegration of the Black family. Men are expected to assert themselves as leaders in the home, taking up responsibility for the progress of the family, especially financially. Black men tend to have this expectation of each other as seen in Wilkins' study of Black men and their constructions of identity (Wilkins). The "deadbeat dads" that Black men are typically associated with abandon that responsibility, leaving the mother helpless and the children emotionally deprived. Black fatherhood is such a rarity that it seems mythical. Black television counters the myth of Black fathers with images of actively present father figures. These television shows put forth an image of Black men that can be loving, nurturing, wise, and financially successful heads of households.

One of the integral components of family-oriented shows that I observed was the strong presence of the father in the home. Each father (or in the case of the Fresh Prince of Bel Air and the Bernie Mac Show, a father *figure*) fulfilled similar duties and roles despite their different personalities. Firstly, they were all gainfully employed throughout the entirety of each series. Cliff Huxtable, the iconic sitcom dad of the Cosby Show, was an obstetrician/gynecologist practicing in a hospital. In a nation where Black men are often feared, he held an occupation that required him to be safe and approachable. Working with women, white women included, in such a personal way connotes a trustworthy man. On the show, My Wife and Kids, modeled after the Cosby show, father Michael Kyle Sr. is a successful small business owner. As a Black man expected to take responsibility, he started his own business, a truck company. In Michael's business, he is required to speak with clients and convince them that his company (an extension of himself) is trustworthy enough to transport their valuable goods, thus perpetuating the idea of "safeness." Also presented in this manner is Bernie Mac as he portrays an uncle that takes in his druggie sister's kids in his namesake's show. Bernie, in the show, is a popular comedian among a

wide range of audiences. White people not only enjoyed his work, they became trusting of him through it. Laughter built zones of comfort for new people in his life, such as in the episode “Bernie Mac, Ladies Man” when he entertains three middle aged white mothers while their children have a play date with each other. He feeds them, shares his home with them, brings them comedic relief, and has them comfortable enough to introduce him to their own husbands at their company picnic.

Through their occupations, Black fathers not only bring a sense of safeness to the Black male persona, they also very clearly demonstrate authority. Philip Banks of the Fresh Prince of Bel Air is an award-winning judge throughout the series. As an enforcer of the law, he advocates on television what Black men in reality are taught to fear and despise: the judicial system. As a judge, he represents a powerful position that is not often occupied by Black men in the courtroom. Philip is the decider in the court; he holds an authority that he also takes home with him. Despite the injustices that have been done against his own kind, Philip exercises his power justly. His career requires honesty, integrity, and proper use of authority, all traits which he carries into his roles as a father.

Philip and the other fathers in the sample are the primary authority figures in their homes. As much power as they shared with their wives, the women ultimately looked to their husbands when a decision needed to be finalized, especially regarding the children. Philip, maybe more aggressively than others, asserts his authority every time his children and nephew make a mess. Philip is always the disciplinarian in the family. In the sixth season of Fresh Prince, Will and Hillary work together on the set of Hillary's local talk show. When the two invite one of the jurors Phillip had recently dismissed as a guest on the show, Phillip is outraged at the results. The juror slanders Phillip on the air and Phillip reprimands Will and Hillary for their actions.

They undermined his authority by first giving voice to a man Phillip had silenced in court and second by allowing the man to publicly embarrass Phillip. Phillip views these actions as a direct challenge to his position in the home and reacts with anger. Even as working adults, Will and Hillary still desperately seek the approval of Phillip as children do: they cry and beg for his forgiveness. Their deference to Phillip clearly shows that he is the authority in his household and those who live in it *will* defer to him. He maintains power by maintaining control of his family.

Comically, the wife could use her sexuality to persuade her husband (i.e. Bernie Mac, My Wife and Kids, the Fresh Prince), but ultimately the man held the power. Bernie was often easily persuaded by his wife, Wanda, and her sexual wiles, especially when she would "hold out" on him. When Mac lays out new house rules (that the children hate), Wanda refuses to have sex with him. Mac shows he has power beyond his temptress wife when he resists her for the sake of maintaining his house rules. For Mac, authority in the home is not to be easily given up. Unlike their sons (once they've matured), fathers are not governed by women. They may be influenced, but in order to maintain patriarchal order, the father places his authority above all else with the expectation that everything and everyone will fall in line.

Finally, I observed that the fathers serve as sources of advice in their respective shows. Cliff Huxtable and Philip Banks demonstrate of the importance of sound, fatherly advice. Cliff, in his goofy ways, pulls Theo out of his boyhood fantasies and into the reality of being a man. In the pilot episode, he establishes his role as the wise father when he sits down to explain to Theo the importance of achieving good grades in school. Theo had his whole life planned out: to become one of the "regular people," get a "regular" job, and live a "regular" life instead of pursuing high paying careers like his parents. Cliff talks to Theo through an interactive example: He gives Theo Monopoly money and deducts all the expenses he would inevitably incur as a



"regular" person. As the dollars dwindled, Theo realized how senseless his aspirations were. Cliff passed to his son his own knowledge of how adulthood works. Albeit comedic in nature, that first episode establishes Cliff's role as a guidance counselor to his children.

Philip Banks also serves the guidance counselor role in *Fresh Prince*, but often in a much more serious manner. In the final episode of the series, all the family members prepare to go their separate ways—the daughters to New York, Carlton to Princeton, Philip and wife to their new apartment on the east coast—except for Will, who refused to admit that he still hadn't found a new place to stay. His bravado had failed him, but his most reliable source of help was Philip. Philip's son Carlton even urges Will to "talk to [his] dad" because he would be their best source of aid. Carlton is well aware that his father is exactly who Will needs to discuss his problems with, and despite his masculine pride, Will knows this too. He eventually admits to his uncle that he needs help. Will worries that his manhood would be questioned if he came back to his uncle for help; for him, needing help is a lack of independence and thus a failed masculinity. Philip emphasizes that Will's manhood is not diminished, but enhanced by the fact that he is able to ask for help. Philip did not mock him or judge Will for his situation, but unhesitantly helps his nephew. Carlton and Will's trust in Philip demonstrates his reliability as a father. The boys, throughout the entire series, relied on his guidance, however reluctantly, and in this final moment of the series, that reliance specifically is demonstrated. The poignancy and timing of the situation may have been for the plot's sake, as the show needed an ending that made sense, but the writers could have just as easily highlighted the other familial relationships on the show and still ended it logically. Instead they chose to focus on Philip's role in Will and Carlton's lives as a standard of manhood and a resource on how to achieve that level. This series underscores the importance of a wise dependable father as he guides his children. On television, Black fathers can exercise a

benevolent patriarchal power because it is an effective method of leading the family. The ways the families relied on the fathers illustrates necessity of a patriarch and communicates to audiences that strong, positive patriarchs are the foundations of strong, positive families.

In this discussion it is obvious that an integral part of the fathers' character is his foil, his son. While fathers in the sample were always very static characters, their sons were quite dynamic with some consistent characteristics shared among them. All of the characters experienced similar developmental arcs, beginning the series as naive teenage boys and maturing into still somewhat naive, but responsible men that were more conscious of their own masculine identities. From boys to men, these sons go through two major stages: as pubescent teens they were naive, sometimes dumb, cocky, low-achieving, and a bit delinquent. As mature teens/adults, the same naïveté and cockiness exists, but the characters tend to gain more depth: they become more aware of their responsibilities, especially to family members and develop a pronounced interest in the pursuit of women. This growth process gives the fathers purpose as they need to be present to guide their sons through their developmental years and help them become respectable men.

The primary developmental stage of sons reflects stereotypical images of Black men in the media. A 1994 study of television's influence on African-Americans found that in the 1980s and 90s, media portrayed African-Americans as "menacing, untidy, rebellious, disrespectful, buffoonish, immoral, hopeless, untrained, uneducated, and noisy" (African American Portrayals on TV 243). Will Smith, for example, came to Bel Air from West Philadelphia where he was born and raised. He was sent to Bel Air by his mother because she wanted to expose him to the finer lifestyle of her wealthy relatives, the Banks family. Will's entrance into the Banks' home and lifestyle was rough initially. His hood persona strongly contrasted with the refined

background of the Banks family and connoted a large gap between economic classes. Even though Will was a welcome guest, his crass way of doing things disrupted the established order of the Banks' home. Philip Banks, his uncle, deemed him a destructive force because he seemingly threatened to "tear down [everything] that's taken a long time to build up." Young boys who relate to Will's hood image can take away a very powerful message: that they cannot achieve the upper class status the Banks' family holds without changing the person that they are. Will's situation speaks to society's notion that Black boys fell into a category of people that simply would not fit into higher levels of society. Despite the shaming that Will experienced, he poignantly broke out of his mold in the final scene of the episode when Philip caught him solemnly playing a classical piece on the living room piano. That moment was the glimmer of hope for the Black male underclass. Black boys were no longer confined to the gutter of society because there could be *something* in them that could help them break into the upper class. Will revealed, vulnerably so, a moment of hope for him to gain the respect of his social superiors, but the beginning of Will's maturation process is focused on resocialization and understanding how to balance the vastly different worlds he experiences. Though most Black sitcoms do not have as many serious notes as the Fresh Prince, the maturation process of each son is still clearly defined, even if in a more comical manner. The different contexts of the shows allow for more variety in the way the sons mature, but they learn the same life lessons, the same values, and the same tenets of being "good men" like their fathers.

In the secondary developmental stage, the boys become young adults and begin to understand the principles their fathers taught them. Between their teens and twenties their physical appearances change dramatically (puberty) and the boys make major changes in how they act and interact with others. The point of change that I focus on in the sons is their increased

willingness to accept responsibility (especially to family members). This point is one of the most significant and consistent changes among sons that I found in the sample as it contributes the most to each son's sense of manhood.

In discussing masculinity and what makes a man an honorable man, responsibility is one of the most recurrent themes in the television sample. In one study of Black males and their perceptions of manhood, an interviewee described it as choosing to say "Alright, I'm going to step up...I'm gonna be responsible for what is mine" (Ford 53). Manhood is described as a deliberate choice made by the man himself. All of the sons display heightened understanding of their responsibilities and *decide* to act on them, especially when they feel like they need to defend the honor of the family. In the *Cosby Show*, when one of Theo's friends begins dating his sister Vanessa, Theo takes great offense when his friend talks about Vanessa the way the boys usually talk about other girls. Theo decides that as the older sibling and brother, he has the authority to ban his sister from seeing his friend in order to preserve her honor and the image of the family. He states that he doesn't want her to become "that girl" because he would have to be associated with her. His sudden assumption of authority is laughable to Vanessa and she does not respect him, but Theo continues his work to break up the budding relationship. Theo's decisions seem to arise from a desire to be protective of his kin; her shame would inevitably become the family's shame-at least in his mind. Although no one ever actually takes Theo seriously, the situation marks an important dynamic change for him: instead of merely mocking his sister, he becomes concerned for her safety as well as that of the entire family. Theo understands his masculinity as a function of his assumed responsibility; when he takes up these duties, he affirms his own masculinity in his own eyes, but doesn't search for the approval of others. Other sons in the sample act similarly to Theo; Will and Carlton take it upon themselves to protect young

Ashley from the possibility of losing her virginity, but ended up losing her respect in their mission to be protectors.

In this sample, sons generally emulate their fathers. As unchanging models of masculinity to their sons, the characteristics of these fathers can be applied to a greater hegemonic model of masculinity. The sons grow and adapt to the models their fathers establish because the fathers epitomize forms of patriarchy that can effectively lead the home. Translating the nature of these fathers into reality is impractical at the very least. Black family sitcoms perpetuate ideals of patriarchy that cannot be easily realized by actual Black males.

### *Single Guy/Dopey Friend*

Black family television prominently displayed the values of strong families, but other shows focused more on strong social relationships. Friendship between males usually represents a nonjudgmental space, one in which it is safe to be oneself in totality, where nothing needs to be hidden. Loyalty and respect are important. Black men on television used friendship as a place to test their manhood. In the space of friendship, Black men could flex their muscles, exclaim their romantic triumphs, and prove their masculinity. Friendship served not only as a place of safe expression, but as an arena, a proving ground for Black men and their manliness. Within these relationships between men, I saw contrasting, but not necessarily conflicting, characters arise in each show: the suave, handsome guy (usually the main character) and his dopey, lovable friend. Although the latter was usually a minor character, the relationship between the two was always memorable and integral to the show. Will and Jazz, Jamie and Braxton, Steve and Cedric, Martin and Cole, and Shawn and Marlon were all classic TV pairs-smooth guy, dopey sidekick.

It was not the friendships/male relationships themselves that I derived masculine ideals from, but the characters within them. The juxtaposition within each pair makes the more desirable characteristics of a man very obvious and less desirable ones much more laughable. The dopey friend always made his suave counterpart look good; his shortcomings highlighted where the other had succeeded and surpassed him. The very fact that this character was always a minor one made it clear that there is one way of a man being promoted as the most respectable way. Although popular, quirky, and lovable, this guy is almost never the focus, and when he is, the moment is short lived. So what exactly does this kind of friendship say about masculinity? A very common theme among gender studies of Black men: that money, women, physicality, and power are powerful tools for men wanting to feel manlier. If a man can acquire these things

easily and abundantly, he is undoubtedly a man in the eyes of other men. Under the premise that friendship is an arena, one friend always triumphed as *the* man because of these things.

One of the male-male relationships that reinforces women as a marker of masculinity is that between Will and Carlton on the Fresh Prince. In the context of romance, Carlton is inept and Will is the expert. Carlton is more intellectual than Will, has access to more money, and is a much higher achiever, but he gets no love from the "honeys." Women are prizes; the more one can win, the more respect he gains from his peers. They are a direct quantitative measure of a man's credibility as a heterosexual male. As Jody Miller notes in her study of gender violence among young Black couples, "young men are rewarded and receive status for their sexual activities with women" (Miller 154). This idea is perpetuated by the contrast between Carlton's dry love life and Will's robust one. All the benefits that Will has (respect from his peers, attention from women, street credibility) are associated with the negative traits of his character—underachieving, laziness, authority defiance, and over-confidence. It sends a message that if nothing else is going for you, *at least* you can get women. It is apparent that despite high achievements, educational success, and high social standing, true masculinity is affirmed by asserting your heterosexuality. Black men are often feared because of their sexuality, but this relationship makes that sexuality not only safe, but prized; it should not invoke fear, it should gain respect. bell hooks, in *We Real Cool*, emphasized that white fear and obsession with Black males' sexuality is a major factor of what drives racism. The way this trait is displayed by Carlton and Will shows an attempt by Black media to spin that sexuality positively for both Blacks and whites. Comically approaching the subject makes it much more tolerable as a practice. The supposed "danger" of Black male sexuality is almost eliminated; it's no longer threatening, but merely a part of "being a man", if not a likable part. In reality, this only fuels the

facet of patriarchy that permits men to feel entitled to have women because it is deemed a normal part of being a man.

Aside from women, money and the pursuit of it is an age-old measure of masculinity. Money serves several functions in the context of masculinity: A man that earns money can support his family and fulfill his duty as head of a household. Money is synonymous with power in America, and Black men, tending to be powerless, have an opportunity to gain power when they can gain money. Money allows a man to free himself from depending on others so he can support himself and finally, money attracts women. In short, money means advancement for Black men. The Wayans Bros were especially adherent to the belief that "money makes the man." Shawn and Marlon Wayans themselves are constantly seeking opportunities to get rich quick, especially Shawn. Shawn is the handsome, smart, suave, steadily-employed foil to his younger brother Marlon, who is fairly dumb, usually broke, and employed part time by his brother and father. The importance of money between Shawn and Marlon is best illustrated by Shawn when he is approached by an old schoolmate who is now wealthy and part of a prestigious country club. At the time, Shawn owned his own newsstand, but his small business was dwarfed by the presence of this wealthy customer. When asked about his business, Shawn immediately begins lying to the man about it to present himself as an equal. The man's money intimidates Shawn, but when offered the opportunity to be considered among the ranks of other wealthy men by way of membership in the country club, Shawn takes the chance. Shawn's need to feel as rich as the man that approached him drove him to hurt his own brother and lie for the man's attention. At the end of the episode, the lesson that being true to oneself and family was learned when Shawn told the truth about himself, but money was still important. The meaning of success was not redefined, but still measured by salary. The show attempted to show that money



isn't everything, but it did not negate the fact that money is still significantly *something*. It reiterated the fact that accomplishments are often measured in dollars. Martin Payne in *Martin* displayed this fact and belief when he became obsessed by the fact that his live-in girlfriend Gina made more money than him. Martin was a clear leader among his friends and he lost a little respect from them when they found out about his situation. More than anything, Martin showed how vital money earning power meant patriarchal power for him and set out to prove to the entire city that he was still the man in his relationship. Unlike Shawn though, Martin didn't learn a lesson about family and honesty. He still needed Gina to appease him and convince him that he did make more money than her (after a little manipulation of the numbers on her part). As much as Gina reminded him that it was unimportant to her, it meant too much to him. He felt genuinely emasculated by something she had no control over. The only way he would feel like a man again was if Gina made him feel like one by denying her own power to make him feel better.

Contrary to both Martin and Shawn, Carlton actually had money and plenty of it. His family was wealthy and he reaped the benefits. Why then would he still not represent the ideal man? Carlton was still lesser to Will in the show and did not gain the respect of others as easily, especially with women. I propose that the reason is that money can be compensated for while women cannot. The idea is that money can be obtained by anyone—money itself cannot itself form an opinion, it can only influence another person's. Women, on the other hand, are sentient beings; they can say no to a man and undermine his identity. Being able to control a woman allows a man control of an unpredictable factor of his masculinity. If a man isn't making money, he can find a way to do so. If a man doesn't attract women, he must be inherently flawed in some way that makes him unattractive. In the television world, a man might be able to use money to get women, but being incapable of attracting them is a major point against his manhood.

Displays of masculinity on television represent a idealized versions of how to be a man, versions which are not always easily embodied by the male audience. And while those images may seem to conflict—wise, monogamous fathers representing stability and leadership contrasting wild sons with appetites for women and money-these images denote that masculinity is fluid and changing, but it follows a structural fluidity. Masculinity follows a defined progression, from naive boy to wise father. In between these two points, we see characters develop through typical stages, and through these stages different characteristics are glorified as manly. Television essentially provides a guideline for Black males on how their manliness should play out at various stages of their lives.

## Hip Hop Analysis

In the past 30 years, hip hop has evolved tremendously from the Adidas tracksuit-clad DJs of the '80s to the tuxedo-donning rappers of today. The hip hop industry has garnered respect from many for the way it illustrates the lives of Black people, but it has also been derided for the same illustrations. Images of poverty, violence, misogyny, and materialism prevail in mainstream hip hop and draw major criticisms from all audiences. They are often read as dangerous, threatening to corrupt the ideals and aspirations of youth, but what are these images? And are they inherently negative? What is rap saying about manhood that other forms of media have not? Hip hop, like a young boy trying to understand his place in the world, is still trying to carve out its space. Thus it is an ever-changing industry and what rap was, is, and will be are three different concepts.

Before discussing hip hop, it is important to note the difference between intended audience and the actual fan base. Hip hop was originally made by Black people *for* Black people. Even with appearances of white rappers such as the Beastie Boys, Eminem, and Macklemore, rap is still largely dominated by Black people. Somehow though, the major listening population is actually white people. Based on figures reported by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA), whites constituted 70-75% of hip hops customer base (Rose 4). This is important to note because all of the negative images of rappers are interpreted as representations of Black people and become a norm for white people in their understanding of the race (Hurt). Many commercially successful rappers may be some version of a thug or a pimp, but that is certainly not the reality of Black males. For whites who listen and watch, but do not truly understand the culture of Black people, consumption of hip hop is dangerous. Their sense of the Black reality is altered by the narrow range of Black culture mainstream rap represents. Black

men are unfairly represented by hip hop and white people's understanding of them gives rise to equally unfair expectations. Black men must handle the pressure from both their own people to be authentically Black while showing white people that rap is not a definitive image of Blacks.

Another integral piece to this discussion is the question of who controls the contents of mainstream hip hop. The hypermasculine, misogynist, violent male image that dominates hip hop did not become typical of hip hop by chance. This image has been and continues to be streamed to audiences because of the deliberately narrowed flow of music. In Byron Hurt's documentary, *Beyond Beats and Rhymes*, he speaks to rappers about the culture of hip hop that exists today. Artist Talib Kweli notes that "we have trusted the media and the corporations to define what hip hop is." Other commentators in the documentary affirm Kweli's statement; aspiring rappers Hurt interviews explain their fake gangsta personas as necessary for success in the hip hop industry. They realize that record companies don't give deals to "wholesome" rappers. One man notes that even though he's not really a thug and doesn't want his son to be one, he plays the part because it's entertainment and the music industry *thinks* the gangsta is what audiences want. Rapper Jadakiss explains that violent rap sells because that *is* what audiences want to see and hear. There are two arguments in place here that try to explain the violent nature of hip hop: Demand determines supply and suppliers shape demand by limiting the supply. In either case, it must be considered that white audiences constitute the majority of demand. Their consumption of the supply of violent thug imagery in hip hop denotes a desire to see those negative images of Black men. Because the image of masculinity is singular in hip hop, it becomes a reference point of Black authenticity for white audiences. "Black male" becomes equivalent to "violent thug." Industry control of rap music has led to the filtering of one violent image of Black men, and while later I will discuss the changes and challenges being made to it,

this controlled image brings further complexity to the task of assembling an acceptable masculine identity for Black males.

In the following analysis, I examine hip hop on a chronological basis, beginning from the late 1990s to 2013 to encompass the early developmental years of my generation up through early adulthood. I divide this timespan into three sections based on decades. I observed major changes in hip hop, content-wise, at each decade. Gangsta rap and alternative rap are the major focuses of the discussion. Gangsta rap includes rap music focused on the inner city lifestyles of Black males with violent overtones and glorification of drug dealing and other violent crimes. The general definition of alternative rap is any sub-genre of hip hop that does not fit under the gangsta rap umbrella. Gangsta rap has become a norm in the hip hop industry, but alternative rap deviates from that, sometimes with outright defiance of gangsta culture. My sample includes alternative artists, but only those that have had significant radio play and therefore wider exposure than underground alternative rappers.

### *Hip Hop in the late 1990s*

Hip hop in the late '90s has been established as a sort of age of gangster rap. This era was a turning point for hip hop as gangsta rap began to take its hold on the industry. The diverse collection of stories that hip hop had been known to tell had been narrowed down and the genre's audience became inundated with stories of the "thug life." Prominent artists in the sample included the Notorious B.I.G. (Biggie), Tupac, Snoop Dogg, and Jay Z. Each of these artists represented the violent, misogynistic rap that people had come to both praise and despise. Their songs dominated radio play while more alternative rappers (like Outkast and A Tribe Called Quest, etc.) waned in popularity. The '90s represents the more impressionable years of the current generation of young Black males, a time when they searched for examples of how to be

men. Rappers at the time were very visible and reinforced familiar standards of patriarchal masculinity.

Using these rappers as a point of reference for legitimate masculine images, the most obvious image that arises is of the thug or gangsta. Collins defines the gangsta/thug as "inherently physical," but that physicality is "neither admired nor can it be easily exploited for White gain" (Collins 158). His identity is defined by the violence associated with his physicality. Ironically, this image is marketed by white men and Black rappers have full understanding of it (Beyond Beats and Rhymes). I found Collins' definition of a gangsta to be too narrow in comparison to the understanding of the gangsta in my own analysis. Based on the sample, I understood the quintessential gangsta to be the gun-toting, drug-dealing, woman-(ab)using, fearless Black male just trying to make it out of the "hood". This definition incorporates the violent physicality that Collins' describes as well as aggressively heterosexual "playa" that hooks describes in *We Real Cool*. The lifestyle that rappers claim to live in their lyrics, such as Jay Z telling stories of "fleeing murder scenes," hanging out at the "dope spot" with his Glock has been viewed as "seductive" to young Black males. hooks states that "the media teaches [boys] that the patriarchal man is a predator," that violence is a survival tool for them to use liberally (hooks 42). The gangsta image is that of a relentless man; he does his deeds without regret. When Snoop Doggy Dogg tells you he "never [hesitates] to put a nigga on his back," that he's "mister one eight seven on a motherfuckin cop" (187 referring to a police code for homicide), he says it confidently. He sees no reason to fear law enforcement and even feels offended by its intrusion on his hustle. Anyone that interferes is subject to his extremely violent reaction. The Rodney King incident occurred only a few years prior to the rise of gangsta rap; what happened to King and the riots that followed was merely a widely publicized example of the contempt Black

people hold towards law enforcement. Snoop Dogg's message is only one of many publicized messages to people that their resentment should be coupled with violent retaliation. Violence as a means of exercising patriarchal power became ok; it was acceptable, even encouraged, among men to use violence to stake their claims and defend themselves. Violence allowed Black men to be predators in a world that saw them as prey.

The gangsta image is inherently scary, but the motivation of a thug—what drives him to take up this lifestyle—is never quite as publicized as much as his actions. Tupac and Biggie are prime examples of how boys tend to become gangstas only because they have to do so to survive. Black males must operate in a culture that tells them constantly that they cannot ever make enough money legitimately to "set them free from racist white tyranny" (hooks 42). Joseph Marshall, a former teacher and founder of the Omega Boys Club in San Francisco, said in a round table discussion about the plight of Black men that a "brother can't find no work today," but a man can step right out of his door and make the money he needs and more by doing it illegally (Herbert). The message that is told to young Black men is that they have to "do what [they] got to do," they have to handle their business and get their own (Marshall NY Times). That same understanding of responsibility is why Tupac sold drugs. The illegal work wasn't initially about luxurious excess for him; he just loved being able to pay the rent when it was due (Dear Mama). His crime was need-driven because there was no other way to pay the bills. Biggie faced similar issues when he had to deal with neighbors who would call the police on him "when [he] was just trying to make some money to feed [his] daughters" (Juicy). Thug living was not merely about violence for the sake of violence or crime just to call oneself a criminal; it rose out of a place of anger, hopelessness, and a patriarchal drive to provide. A man had to fulfill his responsibilities somehow, even if it meant a dangerously illegal route.

Television illustrates the fantasy of Black manhood- the men that could achieve and provide because of their strong work ethic and steadfast morals/values-while hip hop shows the "true" struggle of Black people and their fight to survive. Hip hop is advertised as a reflection of Black culture, but with artists like those in Byron Hurt's documentary, that admit that the gangsta image is for entertainment purposes, how can audiences regard hip hop as an authentic display of Black living? Perhaps it is because television shows in the sample illustrate unrealistic ideals of Black living that hip hop seems more genuine. Gangsta rap, unlike Black television focuses on the darker side of Black life-the poverty, the violence-that television actively ignores. Instead of trying to improve the impoverished state of Black people, hip hop has profited on the sale of "ghetto" culture. The problem for Black males is that peoples continuing consumption of that culture generates rigid stereotypes of "real Black men" that do not and cannot apply to all Black men. The pressure to be authentically Black in hip hop's terms encourages men to take on these gangsta personas to prove their Blackness and their manliness. As one of the interviewees in Kristie Ford's study states, "just because you're Black doesn't mean you're from the ghetto and struggling and you have to be selling drugs and stuff like that...that's the media" (Ford 52). Gangsta rap contributes to the hegemonic model in a way that glorifies the hardship of Black struggle and popularizes the idea that real men are hard, cold, violent, thugs.

Also essential to the gangsta persona portrayed during the late 90s was the disposability of women. The ease with which one could acquire women and an abundance of them spoke to the credibility of one's manhood. It reaffirmed to other men the heterosexuality of a man; if anything about a man's sexual orientation was questionable, he immediately lost respect and his right to call himself a man. On the subject of homosexuality, Marlon Riggs, a homosexual African-American filmmaker states that he "cannot be a Black gay man because, by the tenets of



Black macho, Black gay man is a triple negation" (Collins 172). In hip hop especially, a man cannot be gay because he wouldn't be a man, hence the collecting of women as proof of heterosexuality. Unlike television, rap music deals very openly and directly with homosexuality as an affront to the hardened, hyperheterosexual gangsta male.

In Tupac's "I Get Around," he makes it very clear to women that he has one goal with them and that is to have sex-no attachments or affection. He tells girls who want his time that they "can't be picky, just be happy with [a] quickie" because he doesn't have time to stop and entertain their romantic longings. He regards their sexual availability as a right of his own. He won't put in the effort to impress a girl if it doesn't lead to what he wants; immediate gratification is desired and girls should know they can't "tie [him] down." Women, or rather "hoes," exist only for his sexual wants and needs and for them to expect anything more is naive. "I Get Around" epitomizes gangsta ideology surrounding women in that they are considered sexual objects. Their purpose is to satisfy and reaffirm men of their manliness. Snoop says his girl was looking for "the nigga with the biggest nuts" and that person was indeed him. Women are viewed as sexual objects, but the gangsta understands himself as a sexual object as well. Heterosexual sex for the gangsta is validation of masculinity, but through this Black men objectify themselves and reduce themselves to animalistic, sexual beings. Collins notes that Black masculinity in the western sense is often "highly sexualized" in mass media, particularly to audiences consisting of white men (Collins 161). The gangsta character is a display of Black male sexual predation and continuous exposure of that image to audiences only serves to compound white fear of and fascination with Black male bodies. The consumption of this imagery by Black male youth reinforces expectations of Black men to be virile, sexual experts and that women exist to fulfill the cravings of their manly sexual appetites. Hip hop panders to white fear of Black sexuality

while encouraging Black male youth to take on that same sexuality as a natural part of their masculine identities.

### *Hip Hop in the Early 2000s*

The gangsta image of the late 90s did not confine itself to that era. Instead, it thrived as a subject of millennial hip hop, still violent, sexual, and materialistic as ever. Rappers such as Lil Wayne, T.I., and 50 Cent gained popularity quickly in the 2000s, and thus fueled the popularity of the image of the dope-slinging, heartless killer thug. Rap had taken a slight turn though and focused more exclusively on gangstas celebrating their hood roots by living lives of excess. Drug dealing and gangbanging were not necessity anymore. Although a man may have initially done that to provide for himself and family, these activities became a way to harden a man. They also gave him access to money and therefore access to power. This era of gangsta rap was marked by money making for the sake of having money and to be seen with it. Money was initially a means to a decent standard of living—paying bills, making rent, gifting loved ones—but the 2000s showed that excess was the end goal. While rappers of the late 90s typically celebrated their riches in terms of gratitude, the early 2000s celebrated money strictly as a show of superiority and proof of who was the better rapper. Coupling this altered view of money with violence reinforced the idea that a man must take what he wants. Hip hop as a culture proudly promotes violence as a means of asserting power. hooks notes that "showing aggression is the simplest way to assert patriarchal manhood" because it instills fear and establishes authority (hooks 46). T.I.'s "Rubber Band Man," released in 2003, represents the trend rap had moved towards concerning money and violence. He aggressively asserts himself as a ruthless killer, not fearing the law ("Seven time felon, what I care about a case man?"). With a "9 in [his] right [and a] 45 in [his] other hand," and "[toting] a hundred grand" he makes his stand as an authority in the streets.

He prepares for the world that is out to get him, seeking to defend himself and dominate whatever person tries to attack. For T.I., the rubber bands he wears on his wrist represent "the struggle" that many Black people face on the streets. The work of surviving meant having to sell drugs or whatever illicit activity made enough money to do better. In the same song, T.I. explains that his people are "gonna trap until they come up with another plan," a line reminiscent to those of Tupac's thug struggle. Money for survival is a common theme in hip hop, but the steady and heavy flow of money that drugs and violence provide is what drives many to remain in the "game" despite the risk.

Lil Wayne best framed the need for luxury in his hit "Stuntin Like My Daddy." He touches on money for necessity when he mentions "I gotta eat, yea, even though I ate," but he's already gotten what he needs and it's now his time to enjoy the extra. The song explores all aspects of the newer-age gangsta-abundance of women ("I must've fucked a thousand bitches), strong money flow ("yea bitch, I'm paid, that's all I gotta say"), and ruthless violence ("Imma fuck around a put that boy's brains on the gate"). This version of the gangsta lives life excessively and Wayne does so in every aspect of the song. He reinforces the same predatory image of Black males that had been circulated in mass media before. It is the prevalence of this image, and the force with which media pushes it on the public, that defines Black men. It remains a standard of masculinity-embracing the hyper-masculine gangsta, rejecting all hints of softness.

Although the gangsta image prevailed in the early 2000s, "alternative rap" emerged again with great popularity. Conscious rappers such as Lupe Fiasco and Kanye West achieved significant commercial success by rapping *against* (rather than simply avoiding the subject of) gangsta rap. They spoke against the typified images of over sexual, violent Black males by

focusing on sociopolitical issues, especially those regarding race and class relations. Kanye's "All Falls Down" embodies all that is "conscious rap." The song is an existential approach to American capitalism and the materialism that absorbs Black people. He defies the gangsta first by being vulnerable ("Man, I promise, I'm so self-conscious."). He admits to feeling the same sense of superiority that comes with money, but he also emphasizes that it's all pretense. He views money as a power that consumes people and forces them to stoop incredibly low for it. To admit this as a new hip hop artist and for people to like it denotes the emergence of a different Black man in hip hop. In a genre defined by aggression and sexuality, Black males had something new to consider. Kanye challenges hip hop's rendition of masculinity with a thoughtful, socially conscious image of a man. This man recognizes that money, a key foundation of success as a patriarchal male, is the enemy, particularly of Black people. He makes the note that "we [Black people] shine because they [white people] hate us, floss 'cause they degrade us." His line focuses on money as a weapon against racism, but it eventually works to our own demise. hooks contends that Black men use money as an objective way to exercise patriarchal power similar to that of white men, but Kanye goes on to say that the pursuit of that money is more destructive than it is liberating.

While he fought the role of money in defining masculinity, Kanye still managed to display the same patterns of misogyny in his music that gangsta rap displayed. Women still did not have the respect of the hip hop industry. They were seen as money-grubbing and deceitful; women provide sexual satisfaction and denote status, but they are still not to be trusted. "Goldigger," released in 2005, embodied this belief about women. Kanye tells the stories of women who played men for their money, women who "ain't lookin for no broke niggas" because they target men who can provide the lavish lifestyle they seek. He tells the story of a woman that

has a man for 18 years paying child support, at which point he finds out the child was never his. Women are leeches in this song. The work it takes to impress a woman echoes back to Tupac's "I Get Around," in which he makes it clear that he does not make the time for "these hoes." Just as in Snoop's "Still a G Thang" where he pities the man that puts all his trust in hoes, Kanye warns men that women can and will use their cunning to try and get over on a man. Hip hop up to that point had regarded women with disdain with labels like "bitch," "hoe," and "goldigger," but also as objects, collecting them like trophies on a shelf. Women in the context of hip hop are a double-edged sword: they can build a man's credibility and ruin it all at the same time. Breezing through multitudes of women prevents a man from being hurt by a single one as he gives so little attention to all of them. This is a dangerous practice for Black male youth to emulate because it skews their perceptions of the women in their lives and presents them as enemies rather than caregivers, friends, family, and other positive relationships.

### *Hip Hop Now: Late 2000s and 2010s*

Hip hop for a long time represented hedonistic pursuits of sex, drugs, and money. The image of the gangsta sold so well because men always wanted to be seen as tough, virile, and rich. Money meant power, violence and aggression helped in the acquisition and maintenance of that power, and women were an active display of how that power could be exercised. These mechanisms of power still thrive today, but rap music has taken a major turn in how women fit into male affirmation of identity. Rappers of today are following the path that Kanye originally paved for alternative rap. Hip hop is now presenting very different images of men and people are responding with acceptance. This new man is more self-perceptive, and he views women as beings with purpose outside of men rather than as adjunctive to manhood.

The framework of "All Falls Down" had been laid years before, but rappers are just now allowed to be "soft" on the track and reveal the more vulnerable parts of themselves without losing popularity. One artist in particular catapulted to fame in the mainstream, yet nothing about him is gangsta. Drake is a 26 year old actor-gone-rapper from Canada that has dominated American music charts since his debut with the Young Money label. Drake is what many young men would consider "soft." He did not grow up in the streets, but rather a single parent home with his Jewish mother in an affluent neighborhood. He attended a Jewish day school and visited his father in the summers (Heeb). He did not become a thug because he didn't need to be one. He began a lucrative acting career on the teen drama show Degrassi before becoming a well-known rapper. Nothing about Drake says "thug," yet he still won the respect of the hip hop nation. Even successful alternative rappers like Kanye and Lupe grew up in rough neighborhoods, giving them some gangsta credibility, but Drake has none of that. The only connection to that culture he has is through his mentor, Lil Wayne, who signed Drake to his label and brought him to American fame (Heeb). His music is not that of the "typical" rapper either. He's aggressive, but not blatantly violent; he indulges in women, but he also explores the range of emotional consequences that accompanies that sexual indulgence; and he raps about money, but talks about it more sophisticatedly, referring frequently to luxury brands. Drake has ushered in a new era of hip hop that praises the emotionally vulnerable rapper. He, as well as other artists, takes a deeply perceptive look into the lives of excess they lead, allowing their audiences to explore their motivations and habits. The indulgent lifestyle that hip hop has so often portrayed comes under the microscope in this era and the traditional makings of a "real nigga" come under scrutiny with it. Black males must now question if that vulnerability will make them soft or if it's the direction they can take and still be respected by their peers.

Drake, and other rappers of this new age (J. Cole, Wale), express a wide range of emotions on tracks. This is a direct violation of gangsta code that dictates that men express only anger, not sadness, shame, regret, etc. Those emotions entail vulnerability and thugs are not vulnerable. This vulnerability is exemplified in J. Cole's song, "Let Nas Down," when he admits the shame and resentment he feels when he finds out his music idol, Nas, hated one of his singles. Even more, he blames the creation of the song on the label's pressure on him to make a hit. Unlike gangsta rap, Cole reveals what he feels is wrong with the hip hop industry. He states that "labels are archaic, formulaic with their outcomes," because they release music based on numbers, not content. He defies the gangsta image by defying the system that controls it. While music labels assume that gangsta rap is all that people want to hear, rappers like J. Cole prove them wrong when his songs become successful on the charts.

The vulnerability of rappers in their songs, specifically regarding women, denotes the emergence of masculinity that is aware and sensitive to the consequences of his excess. "Diary," released by Wale in 2009, and "Bad," released in 2013, exemplify hip hop's move towards acknowledging women as sentient, feeling individuals rather than collectibles. While Wale still prides himself on his ability to get women (i.e. "Slight Work" where he proclaims that others "race to these broads" while he "relay[s] and batons them"), "Diary" and "Bad" express sentiments of understanding and empathy towards the struggles that women face from men that hurt them. Drake's most successful song releases are emotional outpourings of his experiences with women. "Marvin's Room" is a reenactment of a pitiful drunken version of himself calling an old girlfriend and begging for her emotional support. Contrary to all things patriarchally male, this song is the story of a man who trusts a woman and reveals his dependence on her.

These changes in rap are small and are being accepted slowly, but I believe that they are leading to a new look for commercialized hip hop that includes broader messages about masculinity. Even though these same rappers still glorify their abundance of women and money, violence is not as prominent a theme as it always has been. The increasing appearance and popularity of emotional songs like "Marvin's Room" and "Bad" show that hegemonic masculinity (as portrayed by hip hop) is undergoing important changes. Like the sons of Black television shows, rappers are beginning to take responsibility for their actions against women. Television sons in the sample took the responsibility of protecting women in their lives, but rappers are now beginning to take responsibility for the hurt they have caused to women. I would conclude that hip hop is not truly defying the patriarchy in this way though. Rappers may be more emotional, but they are not calling for equality with women. This newfound sympathy for women echoes the cries of Louis Farrakhan at the Million March when he called for Black men to accept that they are hurting Black women and need to stop. These new age rappers recognize the effects of their actions, but they fail to understand and resist the patriarchal power structure that causes these problems in the first place. Young males who take on this more "feeling" persona may think that they are in some ways resisting the hegemonic male, but in reality they are only reshaping it to encompass different characteristics.



## Movie Analysis

Black cinema, as defined in this sample, consists of movies with predominantly Black casts focusing on "Black issues." My sample analyzes one type of Black film in relation to patriarchal masculinity: "hood movies" with a focus on coming-of-age stories of young Black men. Movies serve as a space to visually depict the lives of people with a strong focus on a particular message. The sampled films illustrate Black life with visceral images of poverty, crime, and violence, sending the desperate message that Black people, especially young Black males, are in crisis. Black cinema not only tells a story, it provides a detailed guide to Black life.

As previously mentioned, this movie analysis focuses on "hood films," movies that are centered on the lives of Black people living in low income neighborhoods (referred to as the "hood," "ghetto," or "projects"). They tell the stories of Black youth trying to find their place in what they see as a white dominated world. The films in my sample—*Boyz n the Hood* (BNH), *Menace II Society* (MIIS), and *Dead Presidents* (DP)- focus on the coming-of-age stories of young Black males from the hood. These movies detail the challenges and triumphs of what the directors of these movies see as the "crisis" of young Black men. Directors like John Singleton (BNH) and the Hughes Brothers (DP, MIIS) dramatized their interpretation of the everyday experience of Black youth to bring light to their struggle in America. The male roles in these films are key to understanding how they want viewers to understand Black men and Black living. Much like Black television, certain types of characters that I observed were consistently used in each of the hood films, but the actual characters were not rigidly defined by their character type. The type served more as a basic guideline than a template. These characters included:

- The protagonist-the young Black male on which the film focuses; he's always the most dynamic character whose development I'll focus on as a model for Black males in the audience
- The father/father figure as a source of wisdom and guidance to the protagonist
- The best friend who usually served as a foil to the protagonist to some extent

Violence as power is a persistent theme in each of the hood movies and is my main focus in the analysis. Characters in the movies, namely protagonists and the best friends, use violence to assert their dominance over others, despite any consequences (i.e. jail, disappointment from others, injury, death). The directors of these films highlight violence and traditional male patriarchy as the demise of Black males. In *MIIS*, the Hughes Brothers depict the life of Caine Lawson and his experiences growing up in South Central Los Angeles. Early on in the movie we see scenes of Caine's childhood, where he is surrounded by drug dealers and addicts, brought in by his dealer father and addict mother. Caine's parents would throw parties, but they made little effort to hide their lifestyle from him. The violent rages Caine witnessed accustomed him to violence as a useful means of asserting power. Constant exposure to the habits and friends of his parents conditioned him at a very young age to accept violence and crime as normal parts of making a living. Caine's father used violence to control the people around him and he served as Caine's introduction to violent patriarchy. He would physically and verbally abuse his wife whenever she displeased or disobeyed him. Caine's father did nothing to conceal this violence from his son and even murdered a man in front of him. Caine saw death for the first time when his father shot a man for challenging his authority. This taught Caine very early on that money can determine the value of a person and that human lives are disposable. This lesson came

through the actions of his father, a man that served as an example of manhood to him, and it stuck with him later on in life.

Unlike Caine, Tre Styles, the protagonist of BNH (also set in South Central LA), has a father that actively plays a positive mentor role throughout the entirety of Tre's development. While being raised primarily by his mother, Tre spent weekends with his father, Furious Styles. He was an incredibly angry and violent child. The movie does not reveal where he learned his violent behaviors, but it is clear that he has had anger issues for a long time. When challenged by one of his peers in class (he was 11 years old at the time), Tre reacts immediately with angry insults and falls into a rage that causes him to begin beating the other boy. At this point, Tre understands and uses violence in the same way that Caine does-superiority is obtained and maintained by the victor of violent encounters. Both boys learn that intimidation is power and that violence cements that power.

In BNH, Furious Styles defies the typical model of patriarchy that is seen in other films; he teaches Tre how to earn respect instead of demanding the fear of others. They live in a neighborhood where intimidation and violence are the norm for gaining respect, but Furious resists that and expects the same of his son. When Tre moved in with Furious, Furious immediately established his authority in the house by going over the responsibilities and rules he expected Tre to abide by. When Tre asked his father why he didn't have to do any of the many chores that Tre himself must do, Furious responds with the list of things he provides-bills, clothing, food, protection, etc. Furious' authority is earned through the amount of responsibility he holds; it is not derived from the fact that he is a man and feels deserving of authority because of his gender. Furious also sets an example manliness, alternative to others in the film, that exercises restraint instead of relentless anger when provoked. On the first night after Tre's move,

the house was burgled by a local thief. Furious used his gun to scare the thief away and planned to use it in case the thief meant harm, but he called the police afterward for assistance. Two policemen, one Black and one white, came to assess the situation, but the Black officer (ironically enough) only wanted to demean Furious and show his own superiority. Furious maintained his demeanor despite being disrespected by the Black officer's belittling tone. Being in front of his son the entire time, Furious showed Tre that conflict could and should be handled without violence.

Furious' refusal to use violence as a solution proves to be the better approach when Doughboy, Ricky's gangster brother, vengefully kills Ricky's murderers. Violence is illustrated as a dangerous cycle when it is revealed that Doughboy is killed weeks later by the fellow gang members of the men he shot. Tre, who originally joined Doughboy and his friends for the revenge kill, left early because his father taught him a different way to assert his manhood and "handle his business." Because he chose not to return blood for blood like Doughboy, Tre was able to escape the cycle of violence and leave South Central to pursue a college education. The film depicts Tre's life as an example of how resisting the urge to exercise patriarchal dominance can work to benefit a young Black male in America. Those who participate in the patriarchy in the attempt to affirm their own masculinity—such as Doughboy—are fated to the violent ends that the hood offers.

Violence is shown as the demise of Black men because the power associated with it consumes them. What is perceived to be power and authority is actually intimidation and fear. The young men in BNH use violence to scare people and keep them from ever challenging the assumed authority of the intimidators. These intimidators can be challenged with more violence, but ultimately, for anyone to win the battle, someone has to die; death cancels someone's ability

to retaliate and therefore cements the power stance until someone else is willing to kill and take over. There is always someone willing to do that, and the cycle of violence continues.

MIIS depicts violence with the same connotations as BNH, but the ending for the protagonist, Caine, is much more tragic. I believe that Caine's end came because he did not have the same consistently positive and willful guidance of a father figure as Tre. Although Caine had his grandfather in his life, he did not accept the guidance that his grandfather tried to provide. The efficacy of Furious' parenting lay in the fact that Furious related to Tre without enabling him. In one scene, Furious asks his son if he has yet lost his virginity and despite Tre's elaborate and clearly falsified story, Furious doesn't scold him or judge him for the act. He instead emphasizes to his son the importance of using contraception and even provides him with condoms. Caine, on the other hand, does not have a relatable father figure until his late teens. Tre had his father's positive presence at a very young age, but Caine cemented bad habits because of his father's and grandfather's lack of positive guidance. Once his parents died, eliminating his father from the picture, Caine was taken into custody by his grandparents. His grandfather preached at him and spoke to him judgmentally; the guidance he intended to provide summed up to vain ramblings in terms of Caine's development.

As far as violence and power, Caine used violence and extreme aggression to assert himself as an authority in the streets. One of the notable examples in the film is when Caine avenges his cousin's death by killing the men who killed his cousin. While continuing the cycle of violence, Caine also realized that all he had done was kill another man. The act did not make him feel any better about his cousin; it only made him realize that he was capable of killing. This newfound capability enabled Cain to use violence more effectively for his own benefit, such as when he jacked another man's vehicle in broad daylight. He gets in the car and holds a gun to the

man's head, forcing him to give up the rims on his car. He adds insult to injury when he forces the man to buy him a cheeseburger at a nearby drive through. Caine doesn't kill the man or injure him physically, but the ability to instill fear in another gave him the opportunity to take the things that he wanted with very little effort. This level of aggression also gained him respect from his peers and the fear of others.

Although he was able to establish himself as someone to be feared, Caine's violent ways ultimately resulted in his own death. At the end of the movie, Caine and his friends are gunned down by a man he had previously beaten for threatening him. At that point in the movie, Caine had finally decided to move out of town and into the new home of his long-time romantic interest and her son. This move represented new, brighter opportunities for Caine, a chance at a much more fulfilling life than the one he had been living. Caine's life was most comparable to Doughboy's in that they both depended on crime and violence for survival and their ability to intimidate as affirmation of their manhood. Both films show that ultimately, this way of living would not prosper. There was quick monetary gain, but violence against one person was always returned with more extreme retaliation.

Violent displays of patriarchy in these films are shown as the most destructive formulations of masculinity, but they are also the norm in the contextual backgrounds of each film. As I watched each movie, I found that one common theme among the films was addressing the question of why violent patriarchy was socially acceptable among Black men and why they tend to feel obligated to circumvent the law for the sake of survival. In short, hood films express contempt towards white America by depicting the most extreme realizations of how racism has ruined the lives of Black people. Black men are illustrated as the ultimate victims of that racism. Hood films tell stories of men turning to crime because they see no other opportunities for

themselves. Violence is used to gain power because their patriarchal needs cannot be fulfilled in a less extreme way. In DP, the protagonist, Anthony Curtis, dedicated four years of his life to fighting in the Vietnam War, a war that he had been told countless times was "the white man's war." When he returned to his home in the Bronx, he came back to his pregnant girlfriend, Juanita, and their four year old daughter, both of whom he was expected to provide for. He could hardly find work and when he did, he made very little money and soon lost his job entirely. Pressure from Juanita increased and Anthony becomes increasingly frustrated with her failure to sympathize with his circumstances.

Juanita desperately wants Anthony to assume a patriarchal role in her life because that is how she defines a man, but she is a major barrier to his ability to do so. While Anthony was deployed, Juanita relied on a sugar daddy for financial support; she would do sexual favors for him in exchange for money to take care of herself. Juanita regards her actions as necessary and continues to accept money from the man even after Anthony returns. Anthony could not exercise patriarchal power when another man was fulfilling his duties. If *his* woman depends on another man for her needs, Anthony's worth as a man diminishes. In the same way that Martin (on television) is ashamed at the fact that he makes less money than his girlfriend Gina, Anthony is ashamed that Juanita has found other means to support herself. While Gina does not rely on another man besides Martin, that fact that she doesn't necessarily need his financial means undermines his manly authority. Juanita is supported by another man, which is more insulting to Anthony because it shows there is no reason for him to be present. Gina kept Martin around because she loved him as a person and didn't care about his money; Juanita showed that Anthony was easily replaceable. Juanita demanded adherence to patriarchal standards from Anthony, but she was not submissive enough as a woman for him to take on that role. As illustrated by Black

sitcom families, patriarchy works when families are deferential to the patriarch. Wives conceded to their husbands and did not challenge their authority as passionately as Juanita. Unlike Juanita and Anthony though, television couples had very successful careers, consistent income, and overall better circumstances that allowed patriarchy to be practiced effectively.

Anthony felt he had no other options, so he and four other friends set up an elaborate plan to rob a security truck full of money to be burned. Anthony was eventually caught and arrested. During his arraignment in court, he explained to the judge that he did the robbery because "things were getting bad...and [he] had to do what [he] had to do to survive." Desperation and pressure to fulfill his patriarchal duty as a father and provider drove Anthony to the extremes. Although his intentions were pure- he even used his money to donate Christmas gifts to the neighborhood children- he had would inevitably be caught and arrested. Anthony was found guilty of his crime and sentenced to 10 years to life in prison. Even with the best intentions, he was not exempted from the punishment that awaited those who violently supported patriarchy. Anthony saw the lives of his mentor, his war buddy, his best friend, and his new romantic interest destroyed by his master plan, yet the risk did not outweigh the benefit he anticipated in the beginning. We as an audience do not know definitely what would have become of Anthony and the others had he never gone to fight the "white man's war," but the film essentially blames his deployment for his problems. He left and when he returned, no one felt he was the same. A number of things could have influenced the changes in his character, but the director wanted us to know that although Anthony *chose* to enlist, the existence of the war was the white man's fault. Without the war, perhaps Anthony would not have suffered psychologically and financially as he did upon his return home. Such is a speculation at best, but the more important matter is



that the root of Anthony's plight is at the hands of white powers that put the country in war in the first place.

The characters of *MIIS* highlighted the plights of Black people in the ghetto, often alluding to the idea that they are a helpless, hopeless group. They too were driven to lives of crime because of their dismal outlooks and the belief that they as Black men had very little opportunity to make the money they wanted and needed in a legitimate fashion. Caine expressed that "working part time was never [his] style" because he liked the money that came from selling drugs. He made the cash he wanted without being subject to taxation and such things; he could also provide for Ronnie, the girlfriend of his imprisoned mentor, and her son that looked up to him like a father. Perhaps the most poignant examples of the Black struggle in *MIIS* were O-Dog, Caine's best friend, and Mr. Butler, the father of one of Caine's more religious friends. Caine described O-Dog as "America's nightmare": he was young, Black, and "didn't give a fuck." O-Dog was relentlessly violent and feared nothing and nobody. The opening scene of the movie shows him-with a frantic Caine-robbing a local liquor store at gunpoint after the owners provoke him. He kills both owners and steals the security tapes, which he proudly and repeatedly displays to all his friends. O-Dog felt invincible and acted as such, but he did so because he knew that in the hood, he had to be that way to survive. O-dog believed that the hood was a godless place on earth and that if there was a god, he wouldn't allow Black people to live in such miserable conditions. He saw no reason to be an upstanding citizen because it didn't matter in the grand scheme of his life anyway. Good citizenship did not earn him any respect in the streets.

O-Dog is foiled by Mr. Butler, a man that is just as aware as O-Dog of the Black male struggle, but he has more hope in the potential of the boys he mentors. He plays a minor fatherly role in Caine's life, offering guidance in hopes that Caine will get out of South Central. He tells

Caine that as a young African-American male, he must be fully aware that "the hunt is on" and young Black males are the prey. Black men see American society as a battleground where they must fight to survive. MIIS marks Black males as the prey of society, singling them out as the focus of societal disdain. How then is a Black male supposed to achieve power in an environment that seeks to destroy him? This film shows that violent outrage is definitely not the way, but no solution to the problem is offered. The film does, however, note that knowledgeable, positive, caring Black men, fathers, are key to motivating positive changes in Black youth, hence the role of Mr. Butler. BNH iterated that same point by emphasizing Furious' parenting of Tre, who went on to college and escaped his hood. These movies dismantle the traditional ideas of patriarchy by showing how destructive the need for dominance can be to Black men. The need for superiority was all too urgent to young Black men, so much so that they would kill for it; the father figures worked to remove that way of thinking and raise men with a strong sense of responsibility and respect for others. Conflict resolution was exercised with restraint rather than violent outrages that were the norm.

So what does this open criticism of standard patriarchy mean for Black males in the audience? These films served to illustrate the violence that plagues Black communities, but what other way would there be to establish authority in the hood? To make it known that you are a man to be feared and respected? Sociologist Elijah Anderson answers these questions in his work, *Code of the Street*. Anderson explains the explicit code that exists in these hood settings as an informal set of rules that governs that environment. The code tends toward violence because of the circumstances of hood living; low-paying jobs, unemployment, insufficient public services (especially law enforcement), drug use, and racial stigmas all serve to hold Black people in the hood behind (Andersen et al 95). Anderson states that street code is rooted in the "profound

sense of alienation from mainstream society and its institutions felt by many poor inner-city Black people" (95). BNH explicitly addresses this alienation when Furious Styles tries to show Tre and Ricky that personal responsibility is important for success, but that they must be aware of society's anti-Black actions. He does so by asking the boys why gun shops and liquor stores are so prevalent in the hood and tells them that society "wants us [Black people] to kill ourselves." Anderson's code of the street argues that Black people are not inherently violent, but that they are isolated to a point where violence becomes necessary for survival.

Hood films show that strong family values, support, and resistance to traditional patriarchal values are the solution to overcoming the seemingly inevitable fate of the streets. Tre went to college because he resisted violence and followed his father's teachings of manhood; he got out, but having a father is a privilege to the boys in these films. Caine said it best when he questioned Shareef's (Mr. Butler's son) ability to relate to the guys because Shareef had a father that loved and cared for him. Because Shareef had a father, his friends believed that he had a better chance at living a fulfilling life. For boys in the audience, these movies strongly suggest that the only way to effectively overcome standards of violent patriarchy is to have the constant presence of a father figure guiding the way. While women are important as nurturers and caregivers in these films, they do not hold the same role as the fathers do when it comes to leadership and guidance for their sons. When that father figure is inconsistent or absent entirely, the ultimate fate of Black males is in the streets. They must assume violent patriarchal ways to survive in the hood, but in order to have any chance of making it out, those boys must abandon that frame of thought and take on a different kind of masculinity that does not base its worth in superiority over others.

These films show that assuming this masculinity is key to transcending social barriers to Black male success. Tre understood the code of the street, but his father taught him that he did not have to fully immerse himself in it to survive or else he would remain in the hood like Doughboy. Transcendence of social barriers thus means understanding and abandoning street code so that it does not govern one's actions. Resisting the code allows access to the functional society from which the hood has been isolated. This method works only for individuals though and leaves the majority of the hood behind. For the rest of the hood, violent patriarchal action still runs the streets and informs the negative stereotypes surrounding Black people. Ultimately, the isolation resulting from subpar socioeconomic conditions inhibits the changes required for hood members to abandon recklessly violent street code for a more socially acceptable way of living. Instead of the "golden child" of the hood making it out, changes in the socioeconomic structures would allow success and legitimate financial gain to become a norm in the hood. At that point, patriarchy may take on a more benevolent form, such as in television shows, and men could exercise power without violence. Furious' alternative masculinity would no longer be necessary because the standard patriarchal practice would already fall in line with socially acceptable norms.

## Conclusion

Hegemonic masculinity is meant to represent the ideals we want a man to fulfill. A hegemonic model encompasses the qualities of manhood that make a man worthy to be a patriarch. I have explored how Black male portrayals in Black television, hip hop, and hood films contribute to the model, but what does that mean for Black people? How does the hegemonic model defined for young Black men affect or signify the progress of Black people? Patriarchy is firmly planted in American society and among Black groups as the primary gender dynamic. The Black sitcoms in my sample illustrate ideal enactments of that patriarchy and what it looks like when it works. Black television shows that Black families can be functional, happy homes where love thrives and success grows regardless of race because a strong, morally upright patriarch leads the way. Black television depicts the fantasy of patriarchy, but hood films show the reality of it. These films show that hegemony cannot be realized specifically because of being Black and in the hood. Hood films foil the fantasy that television creates and display the harshest realities of patriarchal power, presenting it as a dysfunctional, destructive force. These films show that Black people simply cannot exercise the same patriarchal power as white people because Black is the enemy of white and vice versa. White power subordinates Black people in society, so for Black men to try to achieve the same power as white men is a fruitless endeavor. Hip hop is a celebration of the most negative forms of patriarchy as definitions of "real" men.

These media forms express conflicting views of patriarchy and do not contribute to a similar hegemonic model. Patriarchy is a standard of masculinity in America, so the question remains of how Black men can reach that standard and be accepted into mainstream society. How does a Black male go from the violent, aggressive patriarchy that is embedded in ghetto culture to the benevolent patriarchy that defines Black television families? Perhaps patriarchal

power should no longer be the goal. If it is so damaging as it is portrayed in hood films, or so unattainable as shown in sitcoms, or so reckless as it is in hip hop, patriarchy should be exchanged for a more functional gender dynamic in Black communities. The pressure to be patriarchs in a society where patriarchal power is limited for Black people can be damaging to males building their identity. We must evolve into a more equally weighted gender dynamic, where men are not leaders/providers/protectors *or* failures, where white patriarchy is no longer the model for Black gender performance. Hegemony defines the standards of what society deems an effective patriarch, but these expectations burden the men who seek to fulfill them and cannot. Black men are expected to be like white patriarchs and when they fail to do so, the fault is laid on their personal choices rather than the systems that block their access to patriarchy. I know that patriarchy will not be overthrown at the whim of one essay, but as a Black woman, I see and experience how the urgency of male dominance derails the progress that Black people are capable of. Black male desire for patriarchy exemplifies a desire to be accepted in mainstream society, but such acceptance may never happen because the reality of patriarchy for Black people is so unproductive. Societal standards do not work for Black people; rejection of those standards may yield further isolation, but I believe moving away from patriarchy (and thus mainstream society) would prove more beneficial to Black communities than adherence to current standards in hopes of future acceptance. I would hope to see patriarchy chipped away by challenging our understanding of how a man can and should be a man. Rigid models of acceptable gender performance plague the Black community because they do not allow men or women to build their identities based on personal experiences. Rather, they require individuals to adhere to templates of gender identity that dictate correct and incorrect gender expression. We can no longer require correctness from masculinity, but instead, functionality. When masculinity *works*

with femininity instead of trying to control and subordinate it, it is then that Black people will no longer have to be defined by the patriarchal system that destroys them.

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## Appendix A: Internet Lists Used for Final Samples of Television, Music, and Movies

|            | List Name                                  | List Source and URL  |
|------------|--|--|
| Television | 25 Best Black Sitcoms of All Time          | Complex Magazine;<br><a href="http://www.complex.com/pop-culture/2013/02/best-Black-sitcoms/">http://www.complex.com/pop-culture/2013/02/best-Black-sitcoms/</a>   |
|            | Top 25 Black TV Shows of All Time          | Ebony Magazine:<br><a href="http://transgriot.blogspot.com/2007/09/ebony-magazines-top-25-Black-tv-shows.html">http://transgriot.blogspot.com/2007/09/ebony-magazines-top-25-Black-tv-shows.html</a>   |
|            | 10 Famous Black Fathers in TV History      | AfroDaddy.com:<br><a href="http://afrodaddy.com/for-the-daddies/Black-family-shows-10-famous-Black-fathers-tv-history">http://afrodaddy.com/for-the-daddies/Black-family-shows-10-famous-Black-fathers-tv-history</a>  |
|            | Top African American Television Characters | Black Entertainment Television:<br><a href="http://www.bet.com/celebrities/photos/2012/02/top-african-american-television-characters.html#!012412-celebs-top-african-american-television-characters-red-foxx">http://www.bet.com/celebrities/photos/2012/02/top-african-american-television-characters.html#!012412-celebs-top-african-american-television-characters-red-foxx</a> |
| Music      | The 50 Greatest Hip Hop Magazine Covers    | Complex Magazine:<br><a href="http://www.complex.com/music/2011/03/the-50-greatest-hip-hop-magazine-covers#9">http://www.complex.com/music/2011/03/the-50-greatest-hip-hop-magazine-covers#9</a>   |
|            | The Greatest MCs of All Time               | MTV:<br><a href="http://www.mtv.com/bands/h/hip_hop_week/2006/emcees/">http://www.mtv.com/bands/h/hip_hop_week/2006/emcees/</a>  |
|            | 50 Greatest Hip Hop Songs of All time      | Rolling Stone:<br><a href="http://www.rollingstone.com/music/lists/the-50-greatest-hip-hop-songs-of-all-time-20121205">http://www.rollingstone.com/music/lists/the-50-greatest-hip-hop-songs-of-all-time-20121205</a>  |
|            | The Greatest Rapper Alive (Under 30!)      | Vibe Magazine:<br><a href="http://touch.vibe.com/vibe/#!/entry/the-big-list-the-greatest-rapper-alive-under-30,5020f54c7af68a84dc6c2084">http://touch.vibe.com/vibe/#!/entry/the-big-list-the-greatest-rapper-alive-under-30,5020f54c7af68a84dc6c2084</a>  |
|            | 100 Greatest Hip Hop Songs of All          | VH1:<br><a href="http://touch.vibe.com/vibe/#!/entry/the-big-list-the-greatest-rapper-alive-under-30,5020f54c7af68a84dc6c2084">http://touch.vibe.com/vibe/#!/entry/the-big-list-the-greatest-rapper-alive-under-30,5020f54c7af68a84dc6c2084</a>  |
|            | Top 10 Rappers of the 21st Century         | BET:<br><a href="http://www.bet.com/video/top10rappers/2010/video-230348.html">http://www.bet.com/video/top10rappers/2010/video-230348.html</a>  |

|        | List Name   | List Source and URL   |
|--------|---|---|
|        | The 50 Most Influential Rappers of All Time   | BET:<br><a href="http://www.bet.com/music/photos/2011/09/50-most-influential-rappers.html">http://www.bet.com/music/photos/2011/09/50-most-influential-rappers.html</a>   |
|        | The 50 Best Selling Rap Albums of All Time  | Complex Magazine:<br><a href="http://www.complex.com/music/2013/05/the-50-best-selling-rap-albums/">http://www.complex.com/music/2013/05/the-50-best-selling-rap-albums/</a>  |
|        | The Greatest Hip Hop Albums of All Time   | MTV:<br><a href="http://www.mtv.com/bands/h/hip_hop_week/2005/greatest_albums_0505/">http://www.mtv.com/bands/h/hip_hop_week/2005/greatest_albums_0505/</a>   |
|        | Billboard Rappers with Most Top Ten Hits, Most Cumulative Weeks at Number One, and Most Consecutive Weeks at #1 | Billboard:<br><a href="http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hot_Rap_Songs">http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hot_Rap_Songs</a>   |
| Movies | Top 9 Must-See Black Films  | The Urban Daily:<br><a href="http://t.theurbandaily.com/urbandaily/#!/entry/top-9-mustsee-Black-films,51fbef4a87443d6c8e5acbdb">http://t.theurbandaily.com/urbandaily/#!/entry/top-9-mustsee-Black-films,51fbef4a87443d6c8e5acbdb</a> |
|        | 40 Movies EVERY Black Person Has Seen At Least Twice  | BuzzFeed:<br><a href="http://www.buzzfeed.com/summeranne/stories-that-will-restore-your-faith-in-the-internet">http://www.buzzfeed.com/summeranne/stories-that-will-restore-your-faith-in-the-internet</a>                            |
|        | Top 25 Greatest Black Actors  | BET:<br><a href="http://www.bet.com/shows/bet-star-cinema/photos/2013/04/top-25-greatest-Black-actors.html">http://www.bet.com/shows/bet-star-cinema/photos/2013/04/top-25-greatest-Black-actors.html</a>                             |
|        | The 25 Best Black Movies of the Last 25 Years   | Complex:<br><a href="http://www.complex.com/pop-culture/2013/06/the-25-best-Black-movies-of-the-last-25-years/">http://www.complex.com/pop-culture/2013/06/the-25-best-Black-movies-of-the-last-25-years/</a>                         |
|        | Top Ten Black Summer Movies   | BET:<br><a href="http://www.bet.com/celebrities/photos/2012/07/top-ten-Black-summer-movies.html">http://www.bet.com/celebrities/photos/2012/07/top-ten-Black-summer-movies.html</a>   |

## Appendix B: Television Analysis Notes

*\*episode numbers in parentheses*

| Television Show                    | Character and Description  | Dynamic Changes  | Tendencies/Defining Characteristics  |
|------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| <b>The Cosby Show</b>              | Cliff Huxtable<br>Middle aged father<br>Obstetrician                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fairly static as the main character</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Animated, fun, goofy, especially in comparison to his wife</li> <li>The life lesson teacher</li> <li>Shares authority with Claire, but is deferred to as the final decision-maker</li> <li>Shows affection to wife and children</li> <li>Surrounded by women, but doesn't for his masculinity on them as power, they naturally respect him</li> <li>Other men look up to him for advice (ep 403)</li> </ul> |
|                                    | Theodore<br>Young teen Son   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Underachieving (ep 101)</li> <li>Physical appearance changes dramatically (ep 124)</li> <li>Deeper voice, still naive, but a little more caring and genuine (306, 403)</li> <li>Protective of his sisters (taking upon his own perceived authority)</li> <li>Flexes in front of girls that are outside of the family</li> <li>More interested in girls</li> <li>Seems more interested in social interactions than family time.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Considered the dumb one</li> <li>Surrounded by women like his father, but they don't necessarily respect him</li> <li>Respect for parents and authority</li> <li>Genuine care for family</li> <li>Always so dramatic (comedically of course)</li> <li>Wants to be top dog i.e. the alpha male, but family women undermine him (al in good fun though)</li> <li>Naive all throughout the series</li> </ul>   |
| <b>The Fresh Prince of Bel Air</b> | Philip Banks<br>Uncle to Will,<br>Father to Carlton<br>Judge (decision maker all the time) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Doesn't really change, but we are allowed to see different sides of him that may alter perspectives</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>head of the household</li> <li>Stern, easily angered when authority is defied</li> <li>The advice giver/teacher</li> <li>Constantly worried about public image</li> <li>Saw him at vulnerable moments with Will and Carlton</li> </ul>  |

| Television Show        | Character and Description                                    | Dynamic Changes  | Tendencies/Defining Characteristics   |
|------------------------|--|--|---|
|                        | Will Smith Nephew  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally pretty static in terms of personality, but small changes can be seen over time in other aspects</li> <li>• Comes to be very invested in the family</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Troublemaker</li> <li>• Represented for the hood</li> <li>• Foil to Carlton</li> <li>• Women always a driving factor for his shenanigans</li> <li>• Constant concern with "being real"</li> <li>• Too proud despite mistakes</li> <li>• Always asserting his "Blackness"</li> <li>• More like the son</li> <li>• Mimics Phil's role in lesson teaching for Ashley</li> </ul> |
|                        | Carlton Banks Will's cousin, Philip's son                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Always learns obvious lessons</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High achieving, aims to please</li> <li>• Naive with women and in life</li> <li>• Lacks "street smarts" Eager son</li> <li>• Money minded/driven</li> <li>• Often the object of ridicule in the family</li> <li>• Model student</li> <li>• Must fight to convince others he's Black</li> </ul>   |
| <b>My Wife and Kid</b> | Michael Kyle Sr. Small business owner Father Happily married |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modern day Bill Cosby, but more stern in my opinion</li> <li>• More serious moments than in the Cosby show</li> <li>• Uses past mistakes to teach lessons</li> <li>• More often uses cunning and trickery to teach lessons (a little messed up...)</li> </ul>  |
|                        | Michael Kyle Jr. Son Teenage father                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In a committed relationship with a woman who complements his stupidity</li> <li>• Has a baby and it changes everything - forces him to grow up and be more responsible (his dumbness doesn't really change, but he becomes more vulnerable in front of</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Just plain dumb; same as Theo, but more dramatically so</li> <li>• Never quite ready for life no matter how much he thinks he is</li> <li>• Big aspirations, but no ambition or motivation to pursue them</li> <li>• Protective of sisters</li> </ul>  |

| Television Show     | Character and Description                             | Dynamic Changes | Tendencies/Defining Characteristics   |
|---------------------|---|-----------------|---|
|                     |   | his father)     |   |
| <b>Martin</b>       | Martin Payne  | Static          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Always wanting to assert his manhood with and around Gina</li> <li>• Always realizes how much he loves and needs her and admits that part to his friends</li> <li>• Very territorial with her; jealousy is too real tho</li> <li>• Believes that money makes the man</li> <li>• A bit of a buffoon most of the time</li> <li>• Fairly aggressive</li> <li>• Clearly the leader of the pack when it comes to his friends</li> <li>• For the radio show, he puts on a show of a masculinity for the people , then comes home to Gina and expects her to be ok with it</li> <li>• Love his mommy a lot</li> </ul> |
| <b>Wayans Bros.</b> | Shawn Wayans<br>Older brother<br>Small business owner | Static          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Handsome, good with the ladies</li> <li>• Smart(er) than Marlon</li> <li>• A little bit of a money-grubber</li> <li>• Goofy</li> <li>• Good with people in general (sociable)</li> <li>• Lies to make himself seem better than he is to people he wants to impress (303)</li> </ul>  |
|                     | Marlon Wayans<br>Younger brother<br>Buffoon           | Static          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goofier than Shawn</li> <li>• So crass, awful with women</li> <li>• Super dumb "what's the number for 911?!"</li> <li>• All the stupid ideas come from him</li> <li>• Usually is the reason for all the mess ups</li> </ul>  |

| Television Show            | Character and Description | Dynamic Changes  | Tendencies/Defining Characteristics  |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|--|--|
| <b>The Bernie Mac Show</b> |                           |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very low standards (ep 303 ate that gross muffin)</li> </ul>  |
|                            | Bernie Mac                | Grew to love the kids he took in despite their constant annoyances | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Controlling of the kids</li> <li>• Very "old school" kind of guy (Stop Having Sex episode)</li> <li>• Super traditional values</li> <li>• Very protective of the family</li> <li>• Likes to fulfill traditional ways of being a man (Churchhouse episode, Stay At Home Dad episode)</li> <li>• Wants to remain in control at all times</li> <li>• A little homophobic (Play date episode)</li> <li>• Does "man" stuff and takes ownership of everything</li> <li>• Respects his wife's career though</li> </ul> |



## Appendix C: Movie Analysis Notes

\*numbers before bullet points indicate hour:minute:second into movie

### *Menace II Society*

#### *Opening Scene*

- In liquor store:
  - Boys feared by the store owners
  - Asians that own the store assume the boys are criminals --> boys are angered by the profiling
  - Boys are super aggressive --> guns to handle conflict IMMEDIATELY
  - O-Dog was the crazily angry one, Cain was relaxed and then scared and confused
- Description of Caine's family
  - Dad sold dope, mom did dope (heroin to be specific)
  - Dad beat her whenever she used all of his supply
  - Lifestyle encouraged bad habits (drinking, violence, little boy holding the gun)
    - 9:48- Caine: "I got used to it though"
  - Conditioned to violence
  - Guys around the table --> keep girls high, father immediately resorts to violence when he doesn't get his money from another guy
  - Father kills relentlessly
    - Caine raised by his grandparents after his parents died from the game
- 10:00 High School Graduation
  - "Growin up out here, there was shit that couldn't be learned in no classroom"-Caine
  - But graduating was a huge achievement for Caine
  - 14:10 Caine looks up to his cousin because he has money (beamer, house, fat pocket)
  - 15:34 O Dog is showing off the robbery tape; rejoices in his violence
  - 16:16 "O Dog was America's nightmare-young, Black, and didn't give a fuck"
  - Going through the list of folks-different masculinities
    - Cousin Harold: true hustler, always loyal
    - Doc: through the party on graduation night
    - O Dog: America's nightmare, aggressive, reckless
    - Shareef: born again muslim, always throwing his knowledge and beliefs on other people, but nobody listens
    - Stacey: got a football scholarship, talked about going to Kansas, never got around to it I guess
  - 19:30 Caine and Harold got jacked
    - Harold gets shot, but the shooters didn't take anything -\_\_\_-

- Caine got shot in the shoulder, but he made it
- 23:52 Caine's granddad always comin at us with that religion
  - O Dog "God don't care about us or he wouldn't have put us here"
- 26:40 Celebrating his kill, all about being "hard"
  - "all scared like some bitches"
- 27:46 Blood for blood
  - O Dog to Caine: "you actin like a lil bitch" not wanting to take full revenge --> they took something from you, so you gotta take everything from them = street justice
- 31:17 and it's always overkill
- 31:31 killing them only made Caine aware that he could kill and kill again if he had to; didn't make him feel any better about his cousin's death
- 33:28 "You gotta be hard out here;" pernell's girl is an authoritative figure
- 34:35 Running from cops
- 35:24 Caine teaches Pernell's girl's son how to shoot a gun (cycle)
  - Moms didn't like that Caine was emulating how Pernell used to be
- 38:36 White guy is clearly afraid; so funny, but so sad
- 42:49 Caine thinks he's invincible and can keep doing these crimes and stay out of jail
- 43:00 that one basehead said he would suck O Dog's dick and THAT'S what got him shot --> O Dog didn't like that the crackhead challenged his masculinity in that way
- 45:00 Frikin Shareef is so annoying and he gets NO love
  - Everybody's trying to get Caine to fuck on Ronnie (Pernell's girl)
- 50:25 About to just steal this guy's whip and get some food; that's too funny, but really? In broad daylight?
- 51:60 Just showing he's fully immersed in his lifestyle
- 53:20 "Workin part time was never my style"
  - Learned to cook up from his father, wanted too much money to have a legitimate job
- 54:50 "Leave that bitch alone!" women are ALWAYS bitches in this movie
- 57:02 IMPORTANT CONVERSATION about Shareef having a father and everybody else...not having one
- 57:48 Father son talk, seems intimate
  - Caine invited to the conversation
- 58:30 The Kansas trip --> a way out of the hood and that lifestyle; Mr. Butler's trying to convince Caine to make the changes he needs to make his life better
- 1:00:00 "The hunt is on and you're the prey"-Mr. Butler to Caine on being a Black man in America
  - Mr. Butler was the only one who really cared about his well being
- 1:01:00 Blatant racism from the cops

- 1:04:01 Little boy is brought up with those ideas of being hated by the police
- 1:07:00 Pressure from all kinds of sides to get out of the hood
  - Hard contemplation from Caine now that Ronnie's and Anthony's futures are involved
  - She got Caine to think seriously about moving
- 1:10:00 It's like the freaking repeat of the opening scene with the little boy holding the gun from the thugs on the porch
- 1:11:00 So much resentment towards Black men; living like they are pray (so much hesitance to leave)
- 1:12:00 Ronnie kind of forces the move on Caine
- 1:14:00 Caine --> SUPER aggressive, beath the mess out of Chauncey for messing with Ronnie too hard
  - It's like there's never a middle ground reaction for these people
- 1:16:00 "Being a man" means taking a life
- 1:18:00 A man defeated = pernell
  - Very poignant conversation between him and Caine
  - Pernell gets that the life he lived was just not a good one and that he made a lot of mistakes along the way that he cannot fix
- 1:22:00 Violence is always the first resort for people
  - Grandpa is preachy, but he kicked Caine out; they see him as nothing but trouble and don't even want him around --> "casting out evil"
- 1:26:00 It's like you fight someone and then he HAS to kill you
- 1:30:00 Ended on a super poignant note --> "Do you care if you live or die?"

*Boyz N the Hood*

The younger years

- 1:45 Little boy isn't afraid to get shot because both of his brothers have been shot before
- 3:39 Little Tre is targeted for being cocky, outspoken, troublemaker even, but he's actually really proud of his African roots
- 4:50 Ok...whoa. Why did the boys immediately start fighting though? Anger issues are clearly present in Tre
- 6:59 Tre going to live with his dad because education is important and all of he is learning is violence
- 9:01 It's the father's job to teach the son how to be a man
- 11:05 Instantly the father establishes himself as an authority figure to Tre
- 12:20 Lifting weights together...how manly
  - Teaching Tre responsibility
- 13:20 The gun comes out! But Furious uses it for protection not intimidation
- 14:16 Cops have ZERO sense of urgency, the Black one is super demeaning and worse than the white cop! No Black unity here
- 11:18 Mom has no respect for doughboy, but she loves Ricky
- 20:00 Violence immediately-is it boys being boys or the seeds of a problem
- 21:00 Doughboy's got a gun though...from his older brother who's now in jail --> violence is a cycle
- 23:07 Doughboy stepped up to defend Ricky
- 24:00 compassion from a thug?
- 25:00 How to be a man, by Furious Styles:
  - Look people in the eye for respect
  - Never be afraid to ask for what you need (don't steal)
  - Only respect those who respect you back
  - And then a sex talk
    - All Tre knows is the baby part, but the lesson is that only a real man can raise his children
- 27:18 Black men have no place in the army
  - Why would you serve a country that doesn't serve you?
- 27:59 Boys getting arrested really early and are treated like adult criminals for stealing some candy and junk

As adults:

- 30:48 Ricky has a baby
- 35:24 Some loose idea of chivalry going on here
- 37:47 Black guys running around intimidating for fun: RUDE

- 38:45 Furious is so stern
- 40:24 Dad endorses safe sex very openly and actively (gives Tre condoms)
- 42:31 This sex story is too much for me
  - Furious to Tre: "The pill ain't gone keep your dick from fallin off"
- 45:15 Tre's a virgin, but he lied to Furious so hard
  - Admitted it to Ricky, but he just got laughed at super hard
- 46:44 Why is Tre playing this girl? Becuase she won't have sex because she has values and he's not into that. And he'll say anything to get her to do it
- 48:12 Doughboy and friends don't do anything but sit on the porch and drink and try to talk to hoodrats
- 49:35 Tre always begging for sex
- 57:50 Ricky doesn't know exactly what he wants to do when asked by the recruiter, but there's hope in his eyes
- 1:03:00 Furious got a business of his own!
- 1:05:00 You see the generational gap, but Furious bridges that gap
- 1:08 Questioning God because of the troubles of this world
  - Every time Doughboy
    - mentions women, they're bitches and hoes, never females or women
- 1:12 Cops will stop you for anything! And that Black cop has a vengeance because he is on a serious power trip through the whole movie
  - Black on Black crime and aggression is the real problem here, not the white man
- 1:14 My favorite scene! emotional outburst by Tre-he's just tired of this shit; sank to his knees and his girl needed to comfort him; he feels safe with her

*Dead Presidents*

- 4:40 "You get the pussy yet? She should be giving you something" -entitlement
  - 5:44 "Not fightin no white man's war"-college is the way out (set in the time of the vietnam war in 1968)
  - 9:22 Anthony is such a fool-playful, friendly guy
    - Guys in the back room counting money, talking low, handling business
  - 11:09 Terrance Howard's perm though...
  - 12:12 Guys get SO aggressive when they feel threatened
  - 13:33 Cowboy is a sadist; yet another example of how young boys in environments well beyond their age (Kerby and Cowboy exposing Anthony to violence and the underbelly of the inner city)
  - 15:15 Kerby just letting Anthony act all grown up and stuff (took him on a little ride)
  - 16:35 And Kerby starts beating people relentlessly, uses Anthony as his getaway driver. What a shame.
  - 18:30 Anthony still looks up to Kerby though
  - 19:05 Pressure of college is ON; the parents want Anthony to get an education, but Anthony wants to join the Marines (that's a disappointment for the parents)
  - 20:32 "Fighting in Korea made a man out of you"
    - Independence and making his own decisions define manhood for him
  - 21:42 There's always one guy who thinks he is always getting pussy i.e. Skippy
  - 24:26 Girls in this movie are fast little things
  - 25:08 Why is she dragging him? Anthony wants sex, but she's the one begging for it
  - 27:49 She wants marriage... him not so much
  - 34:50 Ironical that skippy is now fighting in the war
  - 34:52 One guy is a complete sociopath and the white guy is definitely in charge
  - 38:27 Skippy still doesn't believe in the cause; he would rather be back home injured than healthy and fighting in the war
  - 39:47 Ant is emotionally cold during the war --> survival mechanism (don't think about home and you won't be affected by it)
  - 42:51 Kleon is psychotic
  - 45:42 There's a common belief that this is the white man's war, not meant to be fought by Black men
  - 47:16 Moral dilemma of a lifetime for Ant, plays the angel of mercy role and kills his friend who was eviscerated by the Vietnamese troops
- 1973 After the War
- 52:50 Anthony is now respected in the neighborhood (four years in the service)

- 58:37 Everything and everybody are basically the same since Ant left
- 59:47 Kerby gave up crime because the cops got greedy with their cut
- 1:04:00 Anthony goes back to his girlfriend and she has open arms for him
- 1:05:00 Cuddy is a dark skinned, evil looking, old pimp. With a manicure.
  - Cuddy flashes the money and Anthony is immediately frustrated
- 1:07:00 Recurrent theme of "the white man's war"
- 1:09:00 Howard crossed the line talking about Juanita
  - Violence as an acceptable means of defending honor
- 1:12 "can you will yourself a better job?"
  - Juanita doesn't respect Ant's time in the war, but she expects him to be a provider
  - And he has a drinking problem on top of that
- 1:14:00 The war destroyed nearly everybody; crime is the only way to fix anything
- 1:17:00 Nightmare flashbacks
- 1:18:00 Ant loses job; refuses the handouts
- 1:19:00 Cuddy's expecting respect from Ant, but he's overstepping his bounds really
- 1:22:00 Cuddy uses gone as penis on Anthony...weird
- 1:23:00 the money issue is making ant mad, pride is blinding his ability to understand that they are in need
  - Needs to start making money like a real man
  - He explodes on Juanita though because she doesn't understand him and doesn't take his nightmares/paranoia seriously
- 1:31:00 Kleon is a reverend now...but he's going to join the plan to knock over an armored truck...
- 1:46:00 Ant is extra generous to the kids with his shares
- 1:47:00 Kleon bringing too much attention and he gets arrested
- 1:49:00 Skippy overdosed on heroin before the cops found him
- 1:51:00 Ant in court: "Things were getting bad for me and I had to do what I gotta do to survive"
- 1:52:00 White judge is a marine with significant bias against the legitimacy of the vietnam war
- 1:54:00 Prisoner bus is FULL of Black people